1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

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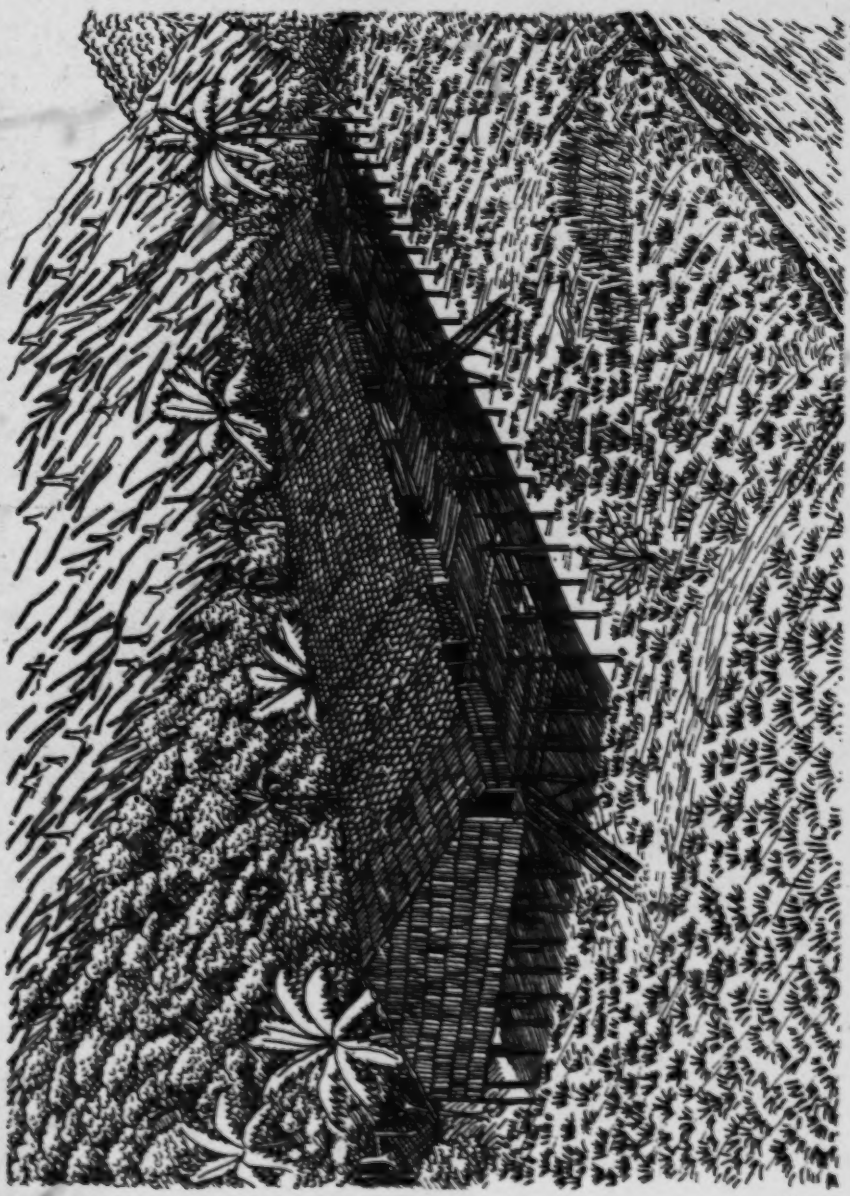
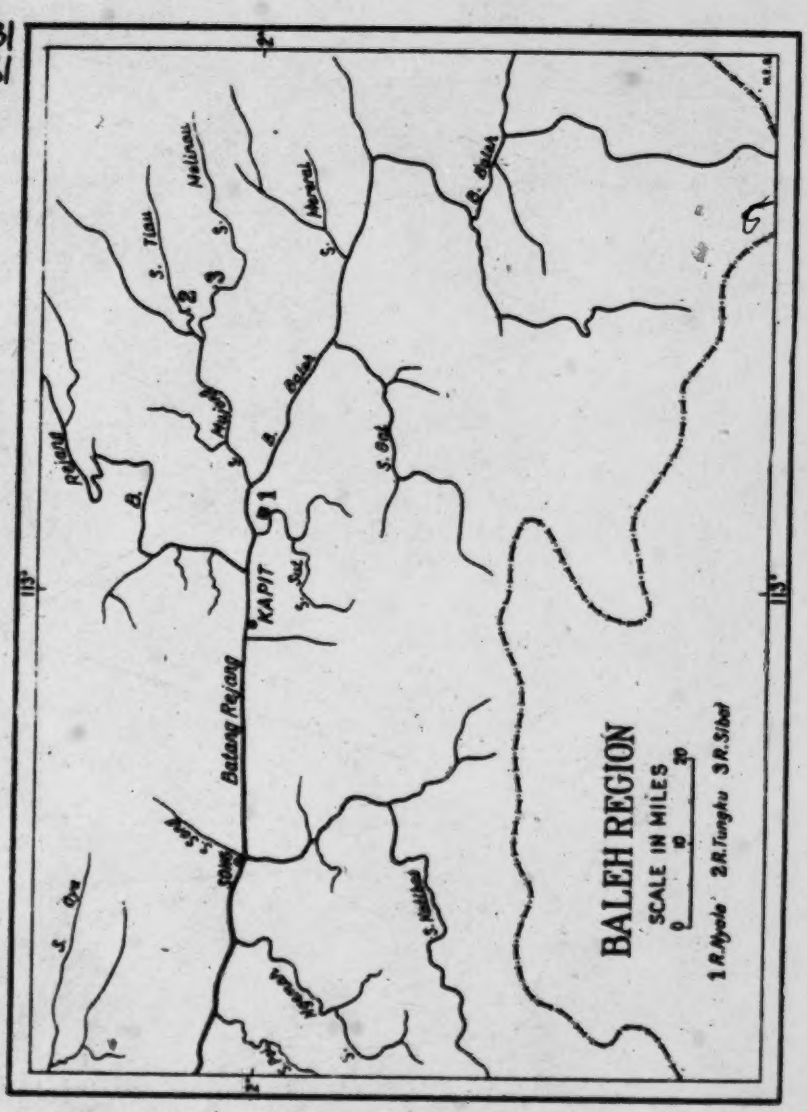


Figure 2. An Iban Long-house

1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

131
361


BALEH REGION
SCALE IN MILES
0 10 20
1 R. Nyala 2 R. Tungku 3 R. Sibat
KAPIT
Batang Rejang
S. Tiau
S. Merah
S. Ost
S. Oya
S. Nibbak
R. Baleh
R. Rejang
R. Ukit
R. Merah
R. Ulat
R. Ost
R. Oya
R. Nibbak
R. Ngemah
R. Ngeh
R. Ngeh
R. Ngeh

within a *bilek*, partition always follows in due course. This precludes the development of joint or extended families, and nowhere in Sarawak did I encounter siblings—married and having adult children of their own—who were still living together as members of the same *bilek*. Again, my observations showed that partition always involves the break-up of a sibling group. When partition occurs one sibling and his (or her) family secedes from the ancestral *bilek* to found a new and independent household. Furthermore, this sibling is just as likely to be a man as a woman; thus, an analysis of 34 cases of partition showed that 17 founders of seceding families were males, while 17 were females. A fundamental feature of partition is that each part—after partition has occurred—is an autonomous unit in its own right, and not merely a constituent part of some wider corporate group. The partition of *bilek* families as it occurs in Iban society is thus a different process from segmentation as it occurs in societies based on unilineal principles.

13. In this brief introduction further analysis of the *bilek* family is unnecessary, for it is intended to do no more than adumbrate the social system upon which Iban agriculture is based. It is most important, however, to realize that the *bilek* family is the principal corporate group of Iban society and the fundamental unit in Iban economic organization.

The Long-House Community

14. *Bilek* families, as we have already seen, are grouped together in long-house communities. These communities vary in size from 4 to as many as 50 *bilek* families, the average size being about 14. Of a sample of 61 long-houses in the Baleh region[1]: (*a*) 25% contained fewer than 10 *bilek* families, (*b*) only 13% more than 20 *bilek* families, and (*c*) 62% consisted of from 10 to 20 *bilek* families.

15. All Iban long-houses are situated on the banks of rivers or streams navigable by dug-out canoes, and throughout the Baleh region one encounters a long-house about once in every two or three miles. Sometimes long-houses may be found within hailing distance of one another, though this is a distinctly rare event. Nowhere in the Baleh are there clusters of houses such as occur among the Land Dayaks of the First Division, or the Iban of the Rejang Delta.[2] The universal rule is that each long-house constitutes a single community; in other words, among the Iban the village and the long-house coincide. Moreover, traditionally each long-house community is an autonomous entity, not subject to the control of any other group. Every long-house is situated on part of a specified tract of land, and between long-houses there are always recognized boundaries, consisting in the main of unambiguous natural features such as streams or ridges. Each long-house then, is the domicile of a compact and independent community of families, and is situated on the bank of a river that is part of a specified territory over which these various families have either rights of access or ownership.

16. In Iban society there is no semblance of any sort of unilateral, exogamous descent group of the type usually described as a lineage or clan. Instead, every individual belongs to an extensive bilateral group which may be termed a kindred. By kindred, I mean to denote that cognatic category which embraces all of an

[1] i.e., the long-houses of the districts of Pengulu Jenggut and Pengulu Grinang, during the year 1948.

[2] At Bawang Assan, for example, some 18 miles down river from Sibu, there are six long-houses all within earshot of one another. All the people of this area cultivate swamp *padi*.

[See analyst's note on p.5, Cat. 8 116,— Analyst]

1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

period of fifteen years or more. In the course of time therefore, the various holdings of each *bilek* family become dispersed over a wide area. This dispersal creates special problems.

69. Growing hill rice in jungle clearings is an undertaking fraught with many difficulties. One of the chief of these is the threat of depredation by marauding animals. In the forests live, and in large numbers, wild pigs, deer, and monkeys, all of which—given the chance—will invade a farm and take their fill of the growing *padi*. It becomes imperative therefore that a farm be vigilantly guarded. To achieve this the Iban live as near as they can to their farms. There are also other advantages. Much time and effort are saved if the farm be near at hand. During the course of the agricultural year a man visits his farm from 150 to 200 or more times. And the women, on whom the heavy burden of weeding and reaping falls, may be even more frequent visitors. By having a strategically placed base, a family can, in the course of a year, save themselves many hundreds of hours of arduous walking over difficult and hilly country. A subsidiary house, built in the same valley as the family's farm, brings within easy reach a hill-side that may be two to three hours' journey from the main long-house. This ease of access becomes an especial boon, when, after reaping, the *padi* has to be carried down from the hill tops—in huge baskets (*lanji*) slung from the shoulders—to be threshed, winnowed and stored. Again, a house near to relatively unfrequented jungle presents far better opportunities than does the main long-house for that foraging for wild fruits, fungi, and other edible plants, at which Iban women excel. There are likewise better opportunities for hunting and fishing. And at the same time, the precincts of the long-house are given a chance to recuperate.

The Dampa System

70. All of these factors give rise to what we may call *the dampa system*. When a new settlement is founded, the forest in its immediate vicinity is felled first, and as long as farms lie within a radius of about half a mile to a mile (or slightly further, if they can be reached by canoe), activities are conducted from the main long-house. After a few years however, as more distant land is brought into cultivation, accessibility becomes a problem, and when this stage is reached the community breaks up into a number of distinct groups—each group farming in a different part of the long-house territory. Typically, the whole community moves to the same general quarter of the territory, where each group takes over the pioneering of a small (i.e. unnavigable) tributary stream. These arrangements are decided upon at a series of conferences (*baum*) in which all the *bilek* families of the community participate. A proposal to farm new land is first mooted by several closely related *bilek* families (i.e. containing siblings, first or second cousins), and usually such a group will have a leader who, although he is never formally appointed, plays a major part in the inauguration and planning of the venture. Ideally he is a man skilled in the taking of auguries. Other families develop parallel plans, and gradually several groups are formed. In size these groups vary from two to ten or more different *bilek* families, depending largely on the extent of the area in which they propose to farm.

71. As soon as the composition of a group has been settled it then operates as a separate unit, its component *bilek* families deciding amongst themselves the way in which the tract of jungle they have chosen is to be parcelled out. But first of all they must decide upon a site for their farm house, or *dampa*. The spot selected is always centrally situated in the valley where cultivation is to occur

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(Plate 4); what is wanted is a level terrace as near as possible to a bathing pool, and a good supply of drinking water. If the valley be confined, and flat land scarce, then two or more *dampa* will be constructed in the same locality. A *dampa* is a structure built on exactly the same pattern as an ordinary long-house, though always on a somewhat smaller scale. Just as in a long-house (*rumah panjai*), each family possesses an apartment of its own, consisting of *bilek*, *sadau*, *ruai*, and *tanju*. Commonly the walls of a *dampa* are of bark, and its flooring of split bamboo, but it is nonetheless, a substantial and well-built house, designed to serve as a main residence for some years. It is usual, for example, to find most *dampa* properly roofed with ironwood shingles—the only form of lasting protection against the torrential rains of central Borneo; and they are comfortably furnished with all of the everday requirements of the Iban. Essential equipment is carried from the main long-house—and the *dampa* becomes the domestic headquarters of the family. In its loft (*sadau*) the *padi* stocks of the *bilek* (which may amount to 100 bushels or more) are stored, and beneath the house, and in its precincts, roam the domestic fowls and pigs of which each family possesses at least a few. Many *dampa* indeed, have the appearance of being permanent habitations. Few of them, however, are occupied for more than five or six years in succession, for as soon as the slopes of the surrounding valleys have all been cultivated, it becomes imperative to move on to fresh jungle. When this stage is reached, the Iban must perforce change their place of abode, though they usually do so with considerable reluctance, the transporting of all the manifold appurtenances of a *bilek* family over several miles of hilly country being no light undertaking. Sometimes it is possible to travel by canoe, but more often than not, everything must be laboriously carried on foot. The old *dampa* is dismantled, and the more valuable parts of it (e.g. ironwood shingles and floor laths, etc.), taken to the new site where a new house is erected. The whole operation, the clearing of the site, building the apartment, and transporting the *padi* stocks and domestic paraphenalia, commonly takes several months; and the time chosen is always the period between the completion of harvest and the beginning of the next agricultural cycle, during the months of April, May, June and July. When the move has been achieved, the new *dampa* then becomes a base for farming the hills and valleys that encircle it, and serves as a main homestead during the four or five ensuing years—or until such time as all the jungle within easy reach has been felled and farmed.

72. In this intermittent way, *dampa* follows *dampa*, until a return is made to the main long-house, there to farm again the secondary jungle in its immediate precincts, and so initiate a further grand cycle of cultivation. The exact nature of this grand cycle of cultivation varies from long-house to long-house, according to the number of *bilek* families in the community and the extent of the territory available to them; i.e. the 'population-land balance.'[1] The range of variation is, in fact, considerable, but many communities in the Baleh region are in a position to follow grand cycles of cultivation of from 15 to 25 years' duration. If one assumes a cycle of say 20 years, it is typical that not more than about a quarter of this period is spent actually farming from the main long-house. The remainder of the period is taken up in operating from a succession of three or four different *dampa*, spaced at strategic points within the long-house territory.

73. When the *dampa* system is being practised, it is usual nonetheless, for family members to make fairly regular visits to the long-house to inspect property

[1] W. Allan, "Studies in African Land Usage in Northern Rhodesia," Oxford, 1949, p. 74.

1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

stored there, and to see that everything is in order;[1] and after reaping is completed a general return (extending over several weeks), is customary so that all *bilek* families may join in the performance of harvest and other rites. During crucial stages of the agricultural cycle however (i.e. felling, sowing, weeding and reaping), the main long-house is almost invariably deserted, members of all *bilek* families living exclusively in their *dampa*. On 1st March, 1949, for example, when I arrived unannounced at the long-house of Temenggong Koh, in the Ulu Baleh, I found all of its forty apartments untenanted; logs of wood were propped against closed doors, *padi* mortars (*lesong*) were upturned and the planks of the *ruai*, bare of mats, and thick with dust—the whole house had the forlorn and derelict air of an unfrequented building. As I discovered, when I travelled on upriver, everyone was preoccupied with the harvest, and the various *bilek* families of the community were living in their *dampa*, distant, in some cases, about seven miles from the main long-house. The encountering of deserted long-houses is a common experience in the Baleh region—but only if one travels unannounced. Normally, the movements of Government officers are made known well in advance, and in good time there is a general return to the main long-house—for it is believed that Government is opposed to the *dampa* system.[2] In this way, the fiction of the permanently occupied long-house is successfully perpetuated; but within an hour or so of the officer's departure, the people are making their way back to their scattered *dampa*.

74. Such surveys as I was able to carry out suggest that the *dampa* system is widely prevalent throughout the Baleh region (and, indeed, in all other similar pioneer areas), all but the smallest of long-houses finding it an imperative expedient. If subsistence is to be maintained and adequate crops be achieved it is essential that those managing a farm should live as close to it as possible. Granted the method of shifting cultivation, recourse to the *dampa* system is inevitable as soon as a community increases beyond about eight *bilek* families, and farms become removed by more than a mile or two from the original centre of cultivation. The various *dampa* into which the *bilek* families of a community are grouped, at any given time, may be thought of then, as satellite houses, in relation to the main long-house—temporary habitations brought into being by the exigencies of shifting cultivation.

The Dampa System at Rumah Nyala

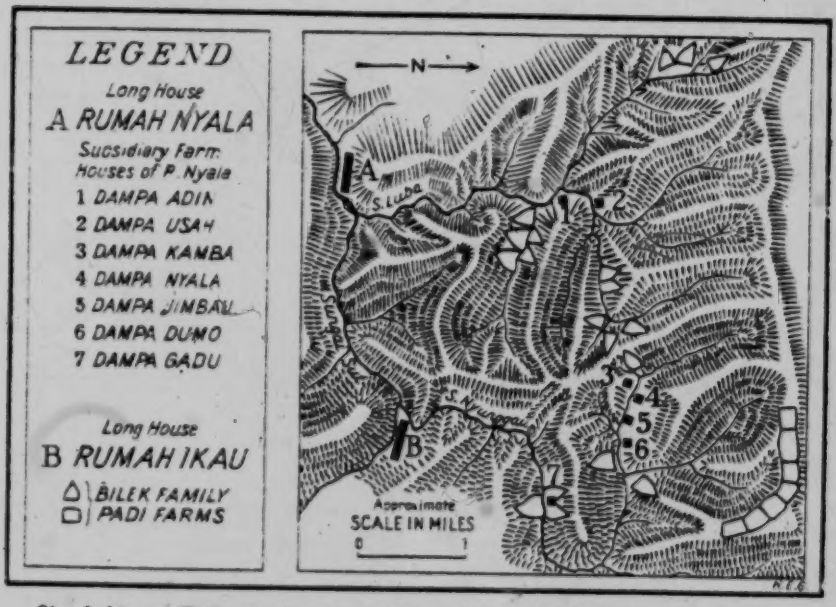
75. To illustrate the working of the *dampa* system in further detail, let us now consider the conditions existing at Rumah Nyala, during the two farming seasons 1949-50 and 1950-51. Rumah Nyala, it will be remembered, is a community of 25 *bilek* families, and the main long-house is situated on the true right bank of the Sungai Sut, some four or five miles from the Sut-Baleh confluence.

[1]Some communities in the Baleh possess rubber plantations, and these plantations (held in private ownership by individual *bilek* families) are generally close to the main long-house. Where rubber plantations do exist, it is usual to find that one or more of the men of each *bilek* family spends as much time as possible living in the main long-house and tapping rubber, while the other members of the family remain in the *dampa* and attend to the growing of *padi*.

[2]Government regulations prescribe that no house shall have fewer than 10 apartments, and strictly the *dampa* system is a contravention of this requirement. Sea Dayak Fines, Third Division, 1940; Part V, Section 10e, states: "A Dayak, who does not within a reasonable time move all his *padi* from his farming hut to his house after harvest, shall be considered to have moved within the meaning of this section." Part V, Section 10f, requires that "The person who erects ('*dulu ngentak*') the first post of a new house of less than 10 doors without special permission shall be fined $25 all to Government, and the house shall be dismantled by the builders."

1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

361 133 The Sut, which drains several hundred square miles of hilly country is navigable for over 40 miles by native canoe, and normally there was sufficient depth of water for me to be able to reach Rumah Nyala in a 36ft. *prau*, powered by a 22 h.p. out-board engine. The Sungai Sut was first occupied by the Iban in the 1890's, and for the most part the hills bordering its course are covered with secondary jungle; virgin forest being found only in the headwaters of its tributary streams. When I arrived at Rumah Nyala in 1949, I found that all 25 *bilek* families were following the *dampa* system, the whole community being concentrated in two minor tributaries of the Sut: the Sungai Luba and the Sungai Nyunggau. Neither of these streams was navigable by canoe; instead there were rough foot tracks along their courses and ridges. As will be seen from the accompanying sketch map, the two streams had a common watershed. The Sungai Luba fell within the territory proper of Rumah Nyala, while the Sungai Nyunggau (as already recounted in Para. 53), though coming under the jurisdiction of a neighbouring community, Rumah Ikau, had been made freely available to certain *bilek* families of Rumah Nyala, on a temporary basis. The people of Rumah Nyala had been farming in these two streams since 1944, and from the outset they had constructed and lived in locally situated *dampa*.



Sketch Map 3. The subsidiary farm houses (*dampa*) and *bilek* family *padi* farms (*umai*) of Rumah Nyala, Sungai Sut, 1949-50
(See *Sketch Map* 1 for approximate location)

361 103 76. In the sketch map (Sketch Map 3) the locations of the various *dampa* of Rumah Nyala for the season 1949-50 are shown. It will be seen that there were two houses in the Sungai Luba, and five in the Sungai Nyunggau. For convenience, each of these seven *dampa* has been named after one of its senior and founding members: but it must be stressed that this system of naming is very

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largely arbitrary, for no *dampa* has a formally appointed head-man. In conversation, etc., the Iban identify a *dampa* by mentioning the name of any one of its members; as, for example, in the phrase: *dampa sida Kamba*, meaning the *dampa* of those *bilek* families living together with Kamba. There is no fixed rule however. *Dampa Adin* (Plate 3), was distant only about 40 minutes walk from the main long-house—a rough track crossing and re-crossing the tortuous course of the Sungai Luba. It is unlikely that a *dampa* would ever be constructed nearer than this to the main long-house, nor is it likely, even in this case, that a *dampa* would have been built, had not the families concerned decided, in advance, to farm the basin of the Sungai Luba for some six years in succession. Over this period of time, the fact that about 80 minutes is saved on each visit to the farm, becomes a most important consideration. Another four *dampa*, grouped within a few hundred yards of one another in the headwaters of the Sungai Nyunggau, were distant about one and a half hours from the main long-house, and were reached by crossing a saddle, about 400 ft. high, from the head of the Luba. *Dampa Along* (Plate 6), on the other hand, was approached by paddling up the Sut, and then walking up the Nyunggau from its mouth—again a journey of about one and a half hours. To travel from *Dampa Adin* to *Dampa Gadu* (passing all of the homesteads into which the community was divided) took about 100 minutes, and although inter-visiting was fairly common, some members of the long-house did not see one another for many weeks on end.

77. In Table 1, the various *bilek* families occupying the seven different *dampa* of Rumah Nyala during the season 1949-50, are laid out in detail. In each instance, the spatial alignment of the constituent *bilek* families is shown; the name given being that of the *pun bilek*, and the number referring to the position of the *bilek* family's apartment in the main long-house. (The *bilek* apartments in the main long-house have been numbered consecutively, beginning at the down-river end of the house.)

Table 1: Composition of Dampa Groups

I. *Sungai Luba:*

(a) *Dampa Adin*		(b) *Dampa Usah*	
bilek No.	*pun bilek*	*bilek No.*	*pun bilek*
14a	Nyuai	1a	Usah
6a	Adin	13	Majau
4	Sating		
22	Anjing		
15	Una		
12	Bunsia		
6	Limau		
14	Legan		
19	Ubong		

II. *Sungai Nyunggau:*

(c) *Dampa Kamba*		(d) *Dampa Jimbau*	
bilek No.	*pun bilek*	*bilek No.*	*pun bilek*
21	Kubu	3	Sube
18	Unyang		
17	Ja	(e) *Dampa Dumo*	
5	Kamba		
		2	Dumo

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361
571

II. *Sungai Nyunggau—continued:*

(f) *Dampa Nyala*		(g) *Dampa Gadu*	
23	Limau	9	Babat
16	Jala	7	Gadu
1	Bangi	8	Gayar
10	Sumbok		
20	Sulan		
11	Rimbor		

78. During the 1950–51 season the position was somewhat different, the following six changes (i.e. 23% of all *bilek* families) having occurred:[1]

(*a*) *bilek* families No. 1a, No. 2 and No. 16, joined Dampa Adin;

(*b*) *bilek* family No. 17 moved to the main long-house, and its place in Dampa Kamba was taken by *bilek* family No. 3 (Jimbau being the second cousin of Kamba);

(*c*) *bilek* family No. 13, moved from the Luba to the Nyunggau, to join Dampa Gadu (Lindan being the adopted daughter of Gayar).

As these changes suggest, *bilek* families operate as autonomous units, and are entitled to join any *dampa* in the precincts of which they possess rights over land.

79. Table 2 summarizes the position for the two seasons, 1949–50 and 1950–51 —the community being divided into seven different *dampa* groups during the first season, and into five, during the second.

Table 2: Dampa Groups of Rumah Nyala

No. of apartments in dampa	*Incidence*	
	During the 1949–50 season	*During the 1950–51 season*
1	2	1
2	1	—
3	1	—
4	1	3
5	—	1
6	1	—
9	1	—
12	—	1
Total number of dampa:	7	5

The Kinship Basis of Dampa Groups

80. In an earlier section of this report attention was drawn to the fact that *bilek* families—in any long-house community—are linked by an intricate web of relationships based on cognatic kinship. We have now seen that the exigencies of the Iban system of shifting cultivation result in the temporary sub-division of the long-house community into a series of subsidiary groups, each living in a separate

[1]It will be noted that one of the *bilek* families of Rumah Nyala divided, for the purposes of farming, into two work-groups—each group having its own farm. This was the family occupying apartment No. 1, in the main long-house, of which Bangi was the *puun bilek*. Usah, his wife, and son (No. 1a) farmed in the Sungai Luba; while Bangi, Rebut, his wife and children (No. 1), worked in the Sungai Nyunggau. These two work-groups constituted nonetheless, a single *bilek* family, for the crops they obtained were put into a common pool, which, like all other *bilek* possessions, was held in common ownership.

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361 571 *dampa*. A further question at once arises: what are the principles which govern the formation of these subsidiary *dampa* groups?

81. In general, they are the same principles as those which determine the composition of the long-house community itself: any cognatic relationship traced from any member (natal, adopted or affinal) of a *bilek* family is sufficient to ensure entry to any *dampa* group. But this principle operates, of course, only when virgin forest is being worked; in an area of secondary jungle all land is owned, and this fact pre-limits the composition of *dampa* groups; i.e. they are a re-association of the *bilek* families responsible for the felling of the original forest. Furthermore, it does occasionally happen that entirely unrelated *bilek* families will combine in establishing a *dampa*. In these cases the basis of association is friendship arising from prolonged residence in the same long-house community. One such instance occurred at Rumah Nyala (e.g. Usah, No. 1a and Majau, No. 13). In the great majority of cases, however, kinship is the articulating principle, but it is essential to realize that bilateral kinship presents *bilek* families with a very wide choice. Any tie, from siblingship to remote cousinship, may be selected and made the vinculum of an association. A detailed analysis of the kinship composition of the *dampa* groups of Rumah Nyala, shows considerable variation: There are eight instances of siblings, who are senior members of their respective *bilek* families, living together in a common *dampa*; but, six other pairs of senior siblings are living in different homesteads. Again, in only two instances did *bilek* families occupying adjacent apartments in the main long-house (e.g. No. 7 and No. 8; No. 17 and No. 18), live side by side in the same *dampa*. The *dampa* system thus offers opportunities for innovation and change which are [157] congenial to the Iban temperament, and entirely consistent with the tenets of Iban social organization. What does emerge very clearly is the salient and vital principle that every *bilek* family is independent, possessing the right to accentuate, for its own purposes, any tie of bilateral kinship within the total community to which it belongs.

The Rôle of the Bilek Family in Padi Cultivation

X 243 592 476 82. We have now seen that each *bilek* family lives as near as it can to the land which it is farming, combining, where possible, with other families that happen to be working in the same area, to form a *dampa* group. From life in these small residential groups the Iban derive many psychological satisfactions, and there is always the reassurance that in time of crisis—birth, sickness and death—there are kith and kin close at hand to offer sympathy and help. But in economic organization the *dampa* group is of minor importance, for among the Iban there is an absence, in agricultural affairs, of any kind of communal ownership, production or consumption. At certain stages in the farming cycle, *bilek* families (though not always from the same *dampa*) do form small co-operative work-groups, but here the principle is one of labour-exchange, governed by strict X 243 592 reciprocity. Never does it happen that two or more *bilek* families work a common tract of land on a crop-sharing basis. Instead, each *bilek* family manages its own farm as a completely independent unit, and has absolute rights of ownership over whatever crops it succeeds in producing. This fact of the autonomy of the *bilek* family, we may single out as the fundamental feature of Iban economic organization. Year by year, each *bilek* family brings into cultivation a tract of land (in most cases it is about four or five acres in extent), from which to provide for its subsistence, and, if conditions be propitious, to produce a surplus for the purchase

1: Freeman E-5 (1949-1951)1955 OC6 Iban OC6

seem of over-ruling importance that every attempt should first be made to enlist native support by exhortation and persuasion. If this is skilfully enough done, it should be possible to induce a large number of Iban to change their ways; then—in due course—the ban on the cultivation of *pangkal*, *krukoh*, and *dijap* could be given a legal sanction.[1]

Complementary Long-Term Measures

331. I have singled out the eradication of the *pangkal*, *krukoh* and *dijap* methods of land usage, as an imperative first stage in the stabilization of shifting cultivation among the Iban. It should be accompanied, however, by a number of complementary long-term measures, all aimed at achieving a proper population-land balance. It is important, for example, that surveys should be begun as soon as possible, and detailed maps prepared showing the existing population-land ratios in the long-house territories of all districts. Only on this basis will it be possible to exercise full control. Full congnizance must also be taken of the effects of population increases.

The Size of the Long-house Comminity as a Factor in the Stabilization of Shifting Cultivation

332. This leads us to an immediate and practical issue: the size of the long-house community. The limited aim which we have set before us is the stabilization of shifting cultivation by the observance of rational methods of land usage. From what has been said of Iban methods of land tenure, it has been seen that each *bilek* family possesses a series of different holdings scattered over the entire territory of the long-house to which it belongs. Further, because of the difficulties inherent in hill *padi* farming it is essential that a *bilek* family should live as near as possible to the land it is cultivating. It is this situation which gives rise to the *dampa* system of satellite houses. Now, although living near to his farm enables an Iban to care for his *padi* much more efficiently than would otherwise be the case, the *dampa* system has the disadvantage that it encourages, and goes hand in hand with bad methods of land usage. As we have described, the building of a *dampa* is a considerable undertaking, and it involves a great deal of work on the part of all the *bilek* families concerned. Once a *dampa* group has settled down in a particular area there is a marked tendency for them to farm there for as long as possible, before tackling the formidable task of shifting all their belongings to another part of the long-house territory. There is, for example, a strong temptation for a family to follow the *krukoh* or *dijap* methods of usage, and so put off the unwelcome day when a move has to be made. This applies particularly to families with not quite sufficient land in the immediate area.

333. Now as soon as the land to be farmed is more than about one mile away from the main long-house, the *dampa* system springs up as a matter of course. If a rational cycle is to be followed it is important, therefore, that the long-house community should be restricted in size. What is really required is a community sufficiently small that a rational cycle, of say 15 years' duration, can be followed, and yet all *bilek* families operate from the main long-house. What size of community does this requirement presuppose? If we accept that the average *bilek* family requires about 4·6 acres per annum, about 69 acres would be required for

[1] If new areas of virgin jungle—say in the Baleh headwaters—are opened to Iban settlement, Government should grasp the opportunity of ruling that the *pangkal*, *krukoh* and *dijap* methods must not on any account be practiced, and of stipulating that occupation is conditional on the observance of a rational cycle of shifting cultivation, of say 12 or 15 years' duration.

3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
OC6 Iban OC6

as memorials of triumph, has degenerated, from its originally sufficiently barbarous intention, into a passion for the possession of these horrid trophies, no matter how obtained. Amongst the land Dyaks the custom still remains as it was probably at first instituted. and no wish for the possession of a head would tempt these people to take one unless it were that of their enemy with whom they were avowedly at war. These land Dyaks differ more decidedly in other particulars from those who frequent the sea, all of which shall be related in the chapter upon their customs and manners.

The sea Dyaks, or such as are in the constant habit of frequenting the ocean for the purposes of carrying off the heads of fishermen, or any other persons whom they may find in a situation not capable of defence, inhabit principally the countries lying in the interior of the great rivers Sarebas and Sakarran, with their numerous and large branches. Settlements of them, which, however, appear to differ in some measure, are also found on the Kenawit and the neighbouring branches of the river Rejang, and one tribe also belonging to this division has its chief settlement at Lundup, pronounced Lundoo in the Sarawak territory. As it is from this tribe that the following remarks are principally drawn, except where it is expressly stated to the contrary, I think it right to give the reader a just idea of its geographical position. This tribe, the name of which is Sebooyoh, misprinted Sibnowan in Captain Keppel's book, came originally from the country

3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
OC6 Iban OC6

situated about the sources of the western branch of the Batang Lupar river, in the direction of the lake Danau Malayu and the Pontianak river. They were expelled from thence by their enemies, and descending the Batang Lupar, established their villages on a small river named Sebooyoh, from which they are now designated. This river is situated a little to the westward of the mouth of the Batang Lupar, between it and the Sadong rivers. From this they carried on war with their old enemies of Sakarran with various success, but were finally compelled, about ten years before the new era of Sarawak, again to decamp farther westward, when they divided into three tribes, and settled in the villages they now occupy. That portion which followed the chief orang kaya of the tribe, and whose family has for many generations produced its chief, settled at Lundu, which has now become a beautiful fortified village, and from which the gallant old chief has frequently made successful expeditions against his hereditary enemies.

The river of Lundu is situated to the westward of the Santu-bong, or western entrance to the river of Sarawak: this river, which is not large, has its rise in the Sarawak territory and country occupied by the land Dyaks of Singhie. Another large village of the Sebooyoh Dyaks is established on a creek of the Sarawak river about a mile below the Malayan town; the creek is called Peduñgan, and the Dyaks are often designated as orang or Dyak Peduñgan—the men or

3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
OC6 Iban OC6

Dyaks of Peduñgan. The village established here is well built, and contains about sixty families; it is not fortified in any way, though the Dyaks possess some small brass guns. The other divisions of the tribe, which are equally under the protection of the government of Sarawak, have villages on the Samarhand and Sadong rivers, but many little clusters of houses are to be found scattered about in the country near the mouths of the above-named streams, nominally belonging to the tribe, though not residing at any of the principal villages. The Dyaks of Lundu have been a pet tribe of Mr. Brooke's, on account of the heroic gallantry displayed by them and their chief on many occasions of difficulty and danger. The conduct of the orang kaya, and his assistance to Mr. Brooke in the Seniawan war, are fully detailed in the Hon. Captain Keppel's work, whom they also accompanied in his expeditions against Sakarran and Sarebas, which are their favourite places of attack, they being always anxious to revenge themselves on these people, who have caused them so much loss and trouble during their residence in their former villages.

The country occupied by the sea Dyaks on the great rivers is generally flat towards the sea, but more undulating in the interior. It is covered in many parts with dense forests, and the soil is rich and productive, so that, when peaceably disposed, they are large exporters of rice, and all kinds of fruits are abundant and very cheap in their districts. As far as is yet

3: Low G-5 (1844-1847) 1848
OC6 Iban OC6

As far as is yet known of the products, gold is not one of them, nor have I seen specimens of any other metals which have been extracted from their soil. Small paths intersect the forests between the villages of all the Sakarran and Sarebas tribes, so that a constant communication is easily kept up, and as their practices and interests are identical, the good understanding which has long existed between these powerful tribes of savages is likely to be maintained, as they probably very well know that a quarrel between them would only end in the ruin of both, their enemies being so numerous, and anxious to revenge upon them the many injuries they have sustained at their hands.

Though the Dyaks generally build their villages near the river for the convenience of launching their boats, there are many of them situated so high towards the sources of the streams as to be unnavigable from the rapids; the people inhabiting such join the boats belonging to some village situated lower down, and are thus enabled to participate in their piratical practices. The villages of the sea Dyaks are formed upon one plan, the houses being, if the tribe be small—that is to say, of about sixty families—all collected under one roof. Each house has its separate door, which opens into a broad verandah covered in by a continuation of the pitch of the roof, and which answers all the purposes of a street, being floored with laths of bamboo or nibong, and on a level with the flooring of the houses. One terrace of such buildings is often 500 or 600 feet

5: Roth E-4 (no date) 1892 CC6 Iban OC6

462 into the far interior, or plunge into the jungle in quest of its produce.

243 As a rule the women have to do all the weeding (*mantun*) by
137 themselves; this is a very laborious task, as the weeds grow so
177 rapidly as to threaten to choke the paddy unless promptly removed. Another grievance is the grass, originally called *rumput teku*, but since nicknamed *rumput blanda*, and which they declare was introduced by the whites to feed their cattle on. It is now a proverbial saying with them that it is impossible to get rid of this grass, likewise is it unprofitable to shake off the rule of the white man.

243 As the paddy begins to ripen, the men return to their homes
784 and the families remove entirely to their farms, where there is plenty to do to scare away the birds and other pests and to prepare for the harvest. The paths intersecting the farm are
[688] closed at this season, and no one can traverse them without paying a penalty or sin-offering of a fowl and a bit of iron. Those who may be suffering from positive want, having exhausted their last year's stock, now glean of the half ripe paddy as much as they require for their immediate necessities; this is called *numbar*.

243 But when the paddy is fully ripe they all turn out, men and
251 women, boys and girls, with knives and baskets and pluck the
415 ripe ears with a few inches of stalk; these are then carried home and put out to dry, after which they are thrown into an enormous sieve suspended from the roof of the house, and threshed by the action of the feet, the grains falling through on to a mat placed underneath on purpose to receive them. After thorough drying in the sun, they are put in tubs made of bark
[343] (*tibang*) and stowed away in the loft or else housed in a hut, built on purpose for them hard by the village, the posts of which are furnished with wooden discs immediately below the flooring to prevent the rats from entering. The Dyak method of pounding the paddy to free it from the husk by means of pestle and mortar is injurious to the grain. By it the hard outer skin which protects it from the weevil is broken and this insect soon takes advantage of the circumstance to attack and destroy it. In the husk or paddy state the rice can be kept for years without injury.

The Punans and Kajamans farm meagrely; they prefer the sago to rice and grow the palm.

2. *Habitations.*

361 A Sea Dyak village is a terrace upon posts varying in length according to the number of houses of which it is composed, and

5: Roth E-4 (no date) 1892 OC6 Iban OC6

as the various houses are built according to a single scale and measurement and by a combination of labour, they rarely fail to present a uniform and regular appearance.[1]

There is always a ladder at either end of the terrace by which to ascend and sometimes one or more towards the centre of the *tanju* or open air-platform. The roof is thatched throughout with the same material—shingles or palm leaves—if the latter the *nipa* (*daun apong*) leaves are used where procurable, and where not (*dàynbira*) the *pandanus*. The flooring in some villages is made of palm trees split into laths (*nibong* = wild varieties of the *areca*); in other cases of cane or bamboo or even twigs. The laths of split bamboo allow a delicious current of air to permeate the apartment. The outer walls are of plank, the inner of bark. No nails are used, the beams or rafters are lashed together with rattans or secured by wooden pegs. The posts are innumerable and of hard wood. The village is surrounded at its base by a wooden palisade which is itself protected by *chevaux de frise* of pointed bamboo. The village is divided by a plank walling into two main portions, the front and the rear. The former partakes of the nature of a very wide verandah and is open throughout its entire length. The latter occupies the rear of the entire building and is sub-divided into apartments, one for each family. Between the plank wall and the edge of the *ruai* is the *tempuan* or footway, a narrow passage running through the centre so that a person may walk from one end of the village to the other without encountering any obstacles.

Every family thus possesses a compact little residence to themselves comprising a *bilieh* or room where they can enjoy privacy when they like, a *tempuan* or thoroughfare where they pound their rice and pile up their firewood, a *ruai* or verandah where they receive visitors, a *tanju* or open-air platform where they air their things and lounge in the cool of the evening, and a *sadau* or loft where they keep their tools and store their paddy.

The *bilieh* or private apartment is furnished with a swinging door which opens outwards and is closed by means of a heavy weight suspended to a thong to the inside. The door can be secured when required by means of a bar. If the room be unusually large, it may have two doors for the sake of convenience. Figures are sometimes carved or painted on the door—saurians among others, grotesque images of supernatural beings, and indecent caricatures of the human person. There is no window such as we understand, but a portion of the roof is so constructed that it can be raised a foot or two by means of a stick to let

[1] Kĭñah houses are packed close together and there are originally three in a row without any intermediate space. The floor is only four feet from the ground, and any one can jump in.

5: Roth E-4 (no date) 1892 CC6 Iban OC6

But the most valuable ornament in the ruai by far is of course the bunch of human heads which hangs over the fireplace like a bunch of fruit; these are the heads obtained on various warpaths by various members of the family, dead and living, and are handed down from father to son as the most precious heirlooms, more precious even than the ancient jars which they prize so highly. The next ornament of paramount importance is the bag of charms which is fastened to the centrepost and which is in like manner handed down from generation to generation and about which there is a great to do if any of the charms are lost or stolen.[1] Other posts are often adorned with trophies of the chase, horns and such like of deer and wild cattle and the heads of animals such as bears, monkeys, and crocodiles killed by the young boys. The empty sheaths of the swords and knives of the family are suspended on wooden hooks, while the naked blades are placed in racks above their heads.

The *tanju* or open-air platform is in front of the *ruai* and is railed at the edge, but the rail is often so slight that it is unsafe to lean against it. The flooring is usually of ironwood the better to stand exposure to the weather. It is used as a lounge in the evening, the view from it being extensive and the breeze refreshing. While the sun is shining the paddy is put out to dry as are the clothes and a variety of other things. The family whetstone and dye vat are kept here under the eaves of the roof.

The *sadau* or loft is used to stow away the baskets and agricultural instruments during the season they are not in use. The paddy is stowed away here in tubs of bark and also the seed for next year's farm.[2] Young women often sleep here and so do the young men and boys who are unprovided with curtains when the mosquitoes and sandflies are troublesome down below. They burn a fragrant bark to keep off the mosquitoes.

Whenever it is deemed expedient by the Sea Dyaks to shift from one locality to another, or to abandon an old habitation in favour of a new one, a general meeting is convened to consider the proposition and the desirability of the measure is fully discussed.[3] If a move be decided upon a few experienced men

[1] While on the Kejang river "a Kanowit gave me the tusk of a crocodile which devoured his sister, and showed me a boar's tusk which was lost to his family by an uncle who was killed by a Ukiet and to recover which he a few years ago killed the Ukiet. He showed me another tusk which was dropped by one of the boars which attacked and destroyed the house of an ancestor living at Lakut." Articles like these appear to constitute their charms.

[2] The Kyans, Kiñahs, and Lanahans stow their paddy in barns built for the purpose. The floor is six feet above the ground, and the posts are encircled with circular wooden discs to keep off the rats.

[3] The Kiñahs move away every few years so as to be always near heavy bush which they prefer for their farms.

5: Roth E-4 (no date) 1892 OC6 Iban OC6

are deputed to select a site and to report on its adaptability. If there be no reason to be dissatisfied with the choice, others are sent to hear whether the birds they venerate are for it or against it. Three days in succession they visit the spot and if the bird omens be favourable they proceed to work at once, and on the following morning the men turn out in a body with axes and choppers to hew down the jungle which is then left to dry. Another general meeting is thereupon convened to determine the question of the *tuah* or chieftainship, the measurement of the timbers, and the sequence of the rooms. It is customary to place the richest people in the centre of the village that they may exercise hospitality to all comers, and the boldest at either extremity so that they may defend the approaches if called upon to do so. The next move is to appoint an evening for the people to meet at the site of the new village. The ground is then cleared and measured out and pegs are put in where the posts are to stand. A piece of bamboo is then stuck in the ground, filled with water and the aperture covered with leaves, a spear and a shield are placed beside it, and the whole is surrounded by a rail. The rail is to protect the bamboo from being upset by wild animals and the weapons are to warn strangers not to touch it. If there is much evaporation by the morning the place is considered hot and unhealthy and is abandoned. Half-a-dozen people or so remain to keep watch and beat their tomtoms all night to frighten away evil spirits. Their friends return early in the morning and if all is well they set to and dig the holes, commencing with the chief's quarters and working simultaneously to left and right of him. Every family must kill a fowl or a pig before the holes can be dug, and the blood must be smeared on the feet and sprinkled on the posts to pacify *Pulang Gana* the tutelary deity of the earth. The posts must be planted firmly, for if one were to give way subsequently it would be regarded as a disastrous event and the house would be abandoned. All combine to labour collectively until the skeleton of the village is complete, and then every family turns its attention to its own apartments. When the building is sufficiently advanced to receive them they pack up their valuables and convey them by water if practicable, halting on the way until they obtain a favourable omen when they proceed rejoicing. Their valuables and cotton stuffs may not be moved into the house before themselves, they must be taken with them; this is required by custom. Before the village can be occupied a pig must be killed and its entrails examined and if the reading be unsatisfactory it is abandoned. After everything is settled a cup of *tuak* (toddy) is passed round.

When a family proposes to leave the village and remove else-

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

CHAPTER III

MANNER OF LIFE

Dyak village house—*Tanju*—*Ruai*—*Bilik*—*Sadau*—Human heads—Valuable jars—Paddy-planting—Men's work—Women's work—House-building—Boat-building—*Kadjangs*—Dyak tools—*Bliong*—*Duku*—Weaving—Plaiting mats and basket-making—Hunting—Traps—Fishing—Spoon-bait—Casting-net—*Tuba*-fishing—Crocodile-catching.

361
342

AMONG the Dyaks a whole village, consisting of some twenty or thirty families, or even more, live together under one roof. This village house is built on piles made of hard wood, which raise the floor from six to twelve feet above the ground. The ascent is made by a notched trunk or log, which serves as a ladder; one is fixed at each end of the house. The length of this house varies according to the number of families inhabiting it; but as the rooms occupied by the different families are built on the same plan and by a combination of labour, the whole presents a uniform and regular appearance.

[417]

342

The roof and outside walls are thatched with the leaves of the *nipa* palm, which are first made into *attap*. These are made by doubling the leaves over a stick about six feet long, each leaf overlapping the other, and sewn down with split cane or reeds. These *attap* are arranged in rows, each *attap* overlapping the one beneath it, and thus

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

forming a roof which keeps off the rain and sun, and lasts for three or four years.

The long Dyak village house is built in a straight line, and consists of a long uncovered veranda, which is called the *tanju*. The paddy is put on the *tanju* to be dried by the sun before it is pounded to get rid of its husk and convert it into rice. Here also the clothes and a variety of other things are hung out to dry. The family whet-stone and dye vat are kept under the eaves of the roof, and the men sharpen their tools and the women do their dyeing on the *tanju*. The flooring of this part of the house is generally made of *bilian*, or iron-wood, so as to stand exposure to the weather.

Next to the *tanju* comes the covered veranda, or *ruai*. This also stretches the whole length of the house, and the floor is made of bamboo, or *nibong* (a kind of palm), split into laths and tied down with rattan or cane.

This *ruai*, or public hall, is generally about twenty feet wide, and as it stretches the whole length of the house without any partition, it is a cool and pleasant place, and is much frequented by men and women for conversation and indoor pursuits. Here the women often do their work—the weaving of cloth or the plaiting of mats. Here, too, the men chop up the firewood, or even make boats, if not of too great a size. This long *ruai* is a public place open to all comers, and used as a road by travellers, who climb up the ladder at one end, walk through the whole length of the house, and go down the ladder at the other end. The floor is carpeted with thick and heavy mats, made of cane interlaced with narrow strips of beaten bark. Over these are spread other mats of finer texture for visitors to sit upon.

The length of this covered veranda depends upon the

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

number of families living in the house, and these range from three or four to forty or fifty.

Each family has its own portion of this *ruai*, and in each there is a small fireplace, which consists of a slab of stone, at which the men warm themselves, when they get up, as they usually do, in the chill of the early morning before the sun has risen.

Over this fireplace hangs the most valuable ornament in the eyes of the Dyak, the bunch of human heads. These are the heads obtained when on the warpath by various members of the family—dead and living—and are handed down from father to son as the most precious heirlooms—more precious, indeed, than the ancient jars which the Dyaks prize so highly.

The posts in this public covered veranda are often adorned with the horns of deer and the tusks of wild boars—trophies of the chase. The empty sheaths of swords are suspended on these horns or from wooden hooks, while the naked blades are placed in racks overhead.

On one side of this long public hall is a row of doors. Each of these leads into a separate room, or *bilik*, which is occupied by a family. The doors open outwards, and each is closed by means of a heavy weight secured to a thong fastened to the inside. If the room be unusually large, it may have two doors for the sake of convenience.

This room serves several purposes. It serves as a kitchen, and in one corner there is a fireplace where the food is cooked. This fireplace is set against the wall of the veranda, and resembles an open cupboard. The lowest shelf rests on the floor, and is boarded all round and filled with clay. This forms the fireplace, and is furnished with a few stones upon which the pots are set

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

their pestles in quick succession at one mortar. In this way the grain is freed from husk, and is made ready for food.

Each family farms its own piece of land. Much of such work as cutting down the jungle and planting is done by a combination of labour, several families agreeing to work for each other in turn. By this means all the planting on the land belonging to a particular family is done in one day, and all the grain ripens at the same time.

When the Dyaks wish to abandon an old habitation in favour of a new one, a general meeting of the inhabitants is held to consider the matter, and the desirability of building a new house is fully discussed. Sometimes it happens that some families do not agree with the wishes of the majority, and these families split off and join another house. If a move be decided on, a few experienced men are deputed to choose a site, and to report on its adaptability. There are several matters to be taken into account. The site must be for preference on rising ground, and be near a good supply of water. There must also be some jungle near, where the inmates can get their firewood, and there must be large tracts of land not far away where they can plant their paddy.

When the new house has to be built on the low-lying, marshy ground in the lower reaches of the river, the choice is not difficult. All that is necessary is to choose a part of the river where the current is not very strong. But in the hill country it is not easy to find a site where the ground is fairly level, and can accommodate a large house of thirty or forty families.

Before building on the chosen site the omen birds are consulted. If the omens be favourable, all the men and

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

Again, it was customary in some tribes to bring home a head as an offering to the spirits when a new village was to be built.

Both these customs are no longer observed. At the feast in honour of the dead—*Begawai Antu*—the headman of the house generally cuts open the bundles of finery that have been put away, and at the building of a new house the killing of a pig is supposed to be sufficient to satisfy the demands of the spirits.

It is presumed that a man who has secured a human head must necessarily be brave. But this need not be the case at all, for, as has been said, the head of a woman or child will serve the purpose. And these heads need not be obtained in open warfare. Very often the head of an enemy is taken while he is asleep. Nor is it necessary that a man should kill his victim with his own hand. Frequently many of his friends assist him in killing some unfortunate man whom they have waylaid, and then he comes home with the head, and poses as a hero!

It was customary in the old days to announce an expedition that one tribe intended to take against another at one of their feasts, when the village was thronged with guests from far and near. Some great Chief would advance his reason for the intended attack. Either some of his people had been slain, and revenge was called for, or else they wished to put off their mourning, and for that required a human head taken in war. Perhaps the reason was that they intended to build a new village house, and so required some human heads to use as offerings to the spirit of the land; or possibly he himself wished to marry, and wanted a head as a

7:Gomes M-5 (ca. 1890)1911 OC6 Iban OC6

501
361
342

A River Scene

The illustration shows some native huts by a river which flows through a cocoanut plantation.

[facing p. 206]

PART II.

THE LONG-HOUSE COMMUNITY.

621
361

84. The whole tenor of the discussion so far has been to concentrate attention on the *bilek-family* as the basic corporate group of Iban society. Let us now consider the wider groupings of Iban society--the long-house communities. From the physical description given earlier in this report, it has been seen that a long-house consists of a series of separate apartments—each owned and occupied by a *bilek-family*—which are joined one to the other so as to produce a single attenuated structure. Three long-houses have been selected for special study: Rumah Nyala—containing 25 apartments, Rumah Sibat—with 32 apartments, and Rumah Tungku—with 50 apartments. All of these three long-houses are however in one respect a-typical, for each far exceeds the average size of communities in the Baleh area. Records made at the time of the 1947 population census show that there were, within the confines of the Baleh, some 133 Iban long-houses, with a total population of 11,348. Unfortunately detailed information for all these 133 long-houses was not available, but if one allows an average of 5.75 persons per *bilek-family*, the average number of bileks per long-house is 14.8. This accords fairly closely with detailed figures for the two largest of the six Baleh districts, data which were available to me at Kapit Fort. These data, which are for the year 1948, and refer to the districts of Penghulu Jenggut and Penghulu Grinang, containing respectively 32 and 29 long-houses, are laid out below.

TABLE 19: SIZE OF LONG-HOUSE COMMUNITIES.

(A) *District of Penghulu Jenggut* (*32 long-houses*).

Number of bileks in long-house:	4	5	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	20	21
Frequency of long-houses containing number of bileks shown:	2	3	3	2	1	4	2	3	1	2	2	2	2	1	2

(B) *District of Penghulu Grinang* (*29 long-houses*).

Number of bileks in long-house:	6	7	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	19	20	23	34	25	27
Frequency of long-houses containing number of bileks shown:	2	2	1	4	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	3	1	1	1

The average for Penghulu Jenggut's district is 12 *bileks* per long-house, and that for Penghulu Grinang's district 15 per long-house. If the two districts are grouped together, it appears that (a). 25%, of the total of 61 long-houses, contain fewer than 10 *bileks*, (b). only 13%, more than 20 *beleks*, and (c). 62% consist of from 10 to 20 *bileks*. These percentages, and my own observations in various parts of the Baleh, indicate that the majority of long-houses approach closely an average of about 14 *bileks*, but the total range in size is, nonetheless, a very considerable one. As far as I am aware, the largest long-house in the Baleh area was Rumah Tungku, in the Sungai Tiau, consisting of 50 *bileks*, while the smallest were two houses each of four *bileks*, one near the mouth of the Sungai Sut, and the other on the south bank of the Baleh, about two miles above its confluence with the Batang Rejang. It is significant to note that in general even within the Baleh, there is a tendency for up-river houses to be larger than down-river ones. Thus the average for Penghulu Jenggut's district (comprising Sungai Sut and the lower reaches of the Baleh), is some 3 *bileks* per long-house below that of Penghulu Grinang's district (comprising the middle section of the Baleh, and the Sungai Gat). This is to be explained in terms of the land situation, there being a gradual drift of population from down-river, where the land is becoming infertile from too frequent use, to up-river regions where there is still virgin jungle waiting to be farmed. In 1949, for example, I witnessed the departure of six different *bileks* from the Sungai Sut, to join a house in the head-waters of the Merirai; again, Rumah Tungku contained five *bileks* which had arrived from Sungai Sut in recent years. The longest settled and most exploited portion of the Baleh itself, are the hills bordering the last 10 miles of its course. This region was first farmed for a few season about 1880, and then again for the years from 1906 to about 1914, and finally from 1922 onwards. The average size of the long-houses in this worked out region is now only 10 *bileks*—certainly the lowest for the entire Baleh area.

The Sites of Long-houses.

85. All Iban long-houses are situated on the banks of rivers, or streams navigable by dug-out canoes. The Baleh and its tributaries drain broken and hilly country, and their involuted courses contain many rapids. These difficulties of terrain mean that suitable sites for long-houses are often hard to find. What is needed is a terrace, some 20 yards wide, sufficiently elevated to escape the threat of floods (some of the rivers rise 30 to 40 feet above their normal levels following exceptionally heavy rains), and sufficiently level to enable the house to extend lengthwise. In the central portion of most long-houses the floor level is some 10 or 12 feet above the ground. At the ends it may be as much as 30 feet, but should the terrace fall away more sharply than this the architectural difficulties are so severe as to prevent the building on of further apartments. This problem is sometimes solved by 'stepping' the house, so that its floor is on several different levels (as, for example, the house of Penghulu Kuleh, in Sungai Amang), but this arrangement is not favoured, and is resorted to but rarely. Another limitation on the length of a house is the ritual prohibition (*pemali*) against a long-house spanning a tributary stream of the river on to which it abuts. The spanning of such a tributary, even though it be no more than a trickle, is believed to bring misfortune to all the people of the house, and is always avoided. The ritual danger is that the river spirits, offended by the filth and refuse cast beneath the long-house, might seek retribution.

86. The number of apartments which a long-house can contain, is limited then, by these two factors. In some areas suitable sites are so rare that houses have to be built on steep spurs, several hundred feet above the river from which the unfortunate women have to fetch, in gourds, all the water required for domestic purposes. Even Rumah Nyala, in the not intractable lower reaches of the Sut, is now hemmed in by a small stream at one end, and by a sudden falling away of the ground at the other. The usual solution when a community finds itself in this position is for additional *biliks* to be built directly on to the front of the long-house. This results in two parallel rows of apartments each abutting on to a common open platform, or *tanju*. In the case of Rumah Nyala, for example, there were 20 family apartments in the main part of the long-house, giving it a total length of 301 feet. Two other families had built on to the *tanju*, and three others, who were sharing apartments in the main house, planned to do so in 1951. Rumah Tungku, to take another example, is most favourably situated in the wide basin of the Tiau, one of the tributaries of the Sungai Mujong. Here the moderately flat land has enabled 39 apartments to be built in one line, giving the house a length of a little over 300 yards. The house, has however, been constructed in a very slight curve, so that it is not possible to see from one end of the *ruai* right through to the other, lying just over a sixth of a mile away. In addition to these 39 apartments in one line, there were five more built on to the *tanju*, and one protruding from the back of the house. The five remaining families of the total community of 50 *biliks*, were either recent arrivals from other areas, or the junior sections resulting from *bilek* partition; and although all of them had constructed farming huts (*dampa*) of their own, none had, in 1950, built on to the main long-house.

The Dispersion of Long-House Communities.

87. The Baleh is still a sparsely populated region. The Iban are pre-eminently a riverine people, and their occupation of a new territory is always by way of the rivers. Infiltrating into the diverging branches of the Baleh, they have, in the last thirty years, dispersed over a wide area. This process is still continuing; the area enclosed by the points to which they have so far radiated is probably about 1,300 square miles. Far from all of this area is actually in use, and much of it is still virgin jungle, but it does represent the territory over which Iban rights of occupation have been established. For this region, as a whole, the density of population is only about nine per square mile, and nowhere does it rise above 18—20 per square mile. The long-houses in which all the people of the Baleh live are scattered along the banks of the 300 miles of river which they have so far occupied. This means that throughout the region one encounters a long-house about once in every two to three miles. Sometimes long-houses may be found that are within hailing distance of one another, though this is a distinctly rare event. Nowhere are there clusters of houses, such as occur among the Land Dayaks of the First Division, or the Iban of the Rejang Delta.(16) The universal rule is that each long-house constitutes a single community; in other words, among the Iban, the village and the long-house coincide. Moreover, traditionally, each long-house community is an autonomous entity, not subject to the control of any other group

88. To-day, of course, every long-house is subject to Government control. Thus within the Baleh there are six districts, each in charge of a Penghulu, appointed by, and responsible to Government. The six districts were, in 1948:

Name of Penghulu	*District*	*Number of Long-Houses in District*
Penghulu Temenggong Koh	Ulu Baleh	9
Penghulu Jugah	Ulu Baleh and S. Merirai	15
Penghulu Grinang	Ulu Baleh and S. Gat	29
Penghulu Sibat	S. Mujong and S. Melinau	22
Penghulu Rahong	S. Mujong	26
Penghulu Jenggut	N. Baleh and S. Sut	32

(16) At Bawang Assan, for example, some 18 miles down river from Sibu, there are six long-houses all within earshot of one another. All the people of this area cultivate swamp *padi*.

to, and when a whole community decided to shift to a new territory, it was seldom, if ever, that all its *bilek-families* remained together. Although the majority usually continued their old association, almost always some would detach themselves, and disperse to separate destinations.

104. From these observations it will be seen that it becomes very important to investigate the history of a long-house, if we are to reach an understanding of its social structure. Despite the fact that the Baleh Iban are entirely non-literate, it is still possible to secure fairly reliable historical data, for all the existing long-houses c.f. the Baleh and its tributaries, were founded subsequent to mid-1922, when the Iban were first permitted to re-settle the area after the insurrections of the years 1915—1919. This means that no Baleh long-house was more than 30 years old at the time (1949—1951) when my investigations were being carried out. It was possible therefore to collect, from members of the senior generation, detailed first-hand accounts of the various long-houses which I selected for study. My investigations show that the setting up of the pioneer long-house is almost always the undertaking of a small group of *bilek-families*. Usually they are fewer than ten in number. Furthermore, they are invariably a compact group, their members being inter-related by intimate ties of kinship. For example, the various *bileks* commonly contain individuals who are either siblings, or first or second cousins. These pioneer *bilek-families*, we may term *the founding group* of a long-house. The importance of this founding group is profound, for the *bilek-families* of which it is composed continue to exert a decisive influence, even although the long-house subsequently increases considerably in size. Once a new long-house has become successfully established, and especially if it has access to tracts of virgin land, other *bilek-families*, from less favourable areas, will attach themselves to it. Typically, they they arrive one by one over the course of the years, and build on to one end or other of the existing long-house. These late-comers are always related to the founding group. That is, one of their members—natal, adopted or affinal—has some sort of cognatic tie with one of the members of the founding *bilek-families*. By this process of accretion, a long-house community gradually increases in size, and in the complexity of its social structure. But, sooner or later, it reaches an optimum stage of development, and then, as its land becomes exhausted, odd *bileks* will begin to break away and move off to join long-houses on the frontier of advance, where there is unclaimed virgin forest waiting to be felled and farmed. As already noted, remote, up-river communities tend to be larger than those that occupy areas where the original jungle has been very largely worked out; and it is the pioneer settlements which grow most rapidly in size. A good example is Rumah Sibat. This house had its beginning in 1924, when six *bilek-families*, from the long-house of Penghulu Koh, in Sungai Dia, below Kapit, settled in one of the lower reaches of the Sungai Melinau, a tributary of the Mujong. Before them lay thousands of acres of untouched forest land. By 1950, the original six *bileks*—by the two processes of accretion and partition—had become 32. In addition, four other long-house communities are now settled in the Sungai Melinau.

The Formation of Rumah Nyala, of the Sungai Sut.

105. Rumah Nyala, the long-house in which we are particularly interested, lies some four to five miles from the mouth of the Sungai Sut, where it was founded in the years, 1922—23. Its exact site is a terrace on the northern (i.e. true right) bank of the Sut, about three hundred yards down-river from a small tributary stream called the Sungai Luba. A residence plan of Rumah Nyala, as in May, 1950, appears as Figure 2. Each numbered section is a *bilek*, or family apartment. In all but one case, the name of the *pun bilek* (c.f.: Para. 48), or the senior natal member of the occupying family is given. The exception is apartment No. 18, where the name of a widow (whose children are still very young) appears instead. It will be noted that there were 20 separate family apartments in one line, giving the house a total length of just over 100 yards. Two apartments—No. 6 and No. 14—were occupied by families still sharing the same *bilek*, despite the fact that partition had taken place. These were temporary arrangements, pending the construction of new quarters; in each case both families had built, and were occupying separate farm houses (*dampa*) and farm huts (*langkau*). Two families—No. 21 and No. 22—both recent arrivals at Rumah Nyala, had built on to the *tanju* of the main long-house; and one other family of newcomers—No. 23—were sharing apartment No. 4, which belonged to long-standing members of Rumah Nyala, who happened to be their kin. There were thus three bilek-families (out of a total of 25), which were not provided with apartments of their own in the main long-house. A similar state of affairs is encountered at most Iban long-houses. This draws attention to the important point that a bilek-family is essentially a jurally defined unit, and that its existence does not depend on actual ownership of a long-house apartment. However, it is the ambition of every family to own a *bilek* of its own, and its members always strive to build private quarters as soon as they can after arriving from another area, or after partition has occurred.

106. The Kinship composition of the 25 *bilek-families* of Rumah Nyala is recorded in Figure 3. All 140 members of the community appear. Each family is enclosed in its own *bilek*, and, as far as possible, the actual residential, or territorial arrangement of the families has been followed. Thus the *bilek-families* occupying apartments No. 1—No. 20, are shown in one straight line, just as in the long-house itself. Families No. 21, No. 22 and No. 23, are shown slightly detached, and for their separate sites, Figure 2, should be consulted. The exact composition of each bilek-family is defined by an encircling line. In addition, a few of the principal cognatic ties between neighbouring families have been recorded; but, of necessity, only a limited number of these ties have been included, for in a residential plan of this kind it is not feasible to draw in all of the intricate bilateral links that do, in fact, exist; if this were done, the lines would be so numerous and crossed as to make the plan unintelligible.

17:Bedford D-5 (1958) 1959 OC6 Iban OC6
Rumah Bujak

175 During the occupation the Japanese cut a channel through
[133] the narrow waist of a *tanjong* downriver from Simanggang. As a consequence water was diverted from a large loop of the river which dried out leaving an area of very fertile padi land. The people of Rumah Bujak settled on this land in 1943.

[423] After the occupation disputes arose regarding right of tenure of land on which the people of Rumah Bujak had settled. Several legal actions arose, as a result of which the people of Rumah Bujak were allowed to remain where they were. They also retain the rubber gardens at the site of their old house at Sungai Pinggai.

342 The present house was built in 1946. Several *langkaus* (temporary dwellings) were built alongside the house in 1955.

The original house built at Pruan contained 19 doors. Since its completion 11 *langkaus* have been built at the ends of the original longhouse.

162 The population of the longhouse was 169 at the start of the
621 investigation. During the period of investigation there were five births and one death. The death was that of a monster shortly
165 after birth, following a pregnancy complicated by hydramnios.

361 The house is built on low-lying tidal swamp. On two or three days each month the ground under and about the house is
356 flooded at high tide. The rooms are small, dark and hot. Some are kept moderately clean but some are very dirty. The majority
342 of rooms have separate kitchens.

231 Animals and poultry are reared under the house. The ground underneath and around the house is liberally strewn with
364 rubbish of all descriptions. There is no formal system of sewage
514 disposal. The occupants of the house defaecate and micturate through holes in the verandah and at the rear of the rooms in the time honoured fashion. Faeces are devoured by pigs and
[231] poultry.

Agriculture

241 The people of Rumah Bujak own extremely fertile swamp
433 padi land. They grow sufficient rice for their own needs and

17:Bedford D-5 (1958) 1959 OC6 Iban OC6
Rumah Bujak

a surplus which they sell to the bazaar. The padi is planted in July and August and harvested in February and March. They grow vegetables and fruit around the house and along the bunds between the padi fields, partly for their own consumption and partly to sell in the bazaar. They rear pigs and poultry and own five head of cattle comprising one bull and four cows.

When not employed in padi cultivation and jobs about the longhouse the people spend a large portion of each year at Sungai Pinggai tapping rubber. While so employed they live in their rubber gardens for days or weeks at a time.

Social Pattern

The situation at Rumah Bujak, where the people live part of the year in the longhouse and part of the year in *langkau* a considerable distance from the longhouse, travelling between the two places as required is the rule rather than the exception in the Second Division. For example many Sea Dayaks in the Saribas and Rimbas Rivers have their longhouses upriver and swamp padi fields downriver, travelling between the two as required.

In short the Sea Dayak in the Second Division at least is semi-nomadic. This factor would assume great importance if medical surveys or the attack on specific diseases by mass drug administration were being planned, where it is necessary to have as near one hundred per cent of the population as possible in the longhouse at the same time. If a wide area were being covered by such a campaign, no particular season of the year would be ideal for all parts of the area in which the campaigning was being carried out.

The Sea Dayak is understandably reluctant to curtail his movements to and fro, as they have usually an agricultural motive and on agriculture his main source of livelihood depends. The only answer to this problem would be intensive propaganda before a medical campaign enlisting the enthusiastic help of the administrative authorities.

This problem of continuous migration kept cropping up throughout the present study. It made investigations more laborious and time-consuming than they would otherwise have been.

121 177 found them twenty years ago, the Ibans of the Sibu District have accommodated to numerous influences that have been introduced to them, and especially within the past twenty years.

175 166 177 The movement of the Ibans into this district has occurred within the past 125 years. When James Brooke arrived in Sarawak, the movements of the Ibans into the southern tributaries of the Rajang were just beginning. Entering from the south, they soon invaded the land north of the Rajang, driving out or subduing and assimilating the former inhabitants.

In his program of pacification, James Brooke established Fort Brooke in 1862 at the point of the division of the Rajang and Lgan Rivers. [439] Under the protection of the fort, the point soon became a nexus for trade between Chinese, Ibans, Malays, Melanaus and others. From the beginning of the center, Ibans have both served and been served by the trade carried on there.

361 177 Today, few Ibans in the district live more than two hours travel from the town which is accessible to them by private boats, public launches and ferries, cars, taxis and buses. Their adaptation has been influenced by the development of the town as an administrative center, entrepot, and by acculturation to the values mediated through residents and visitors.

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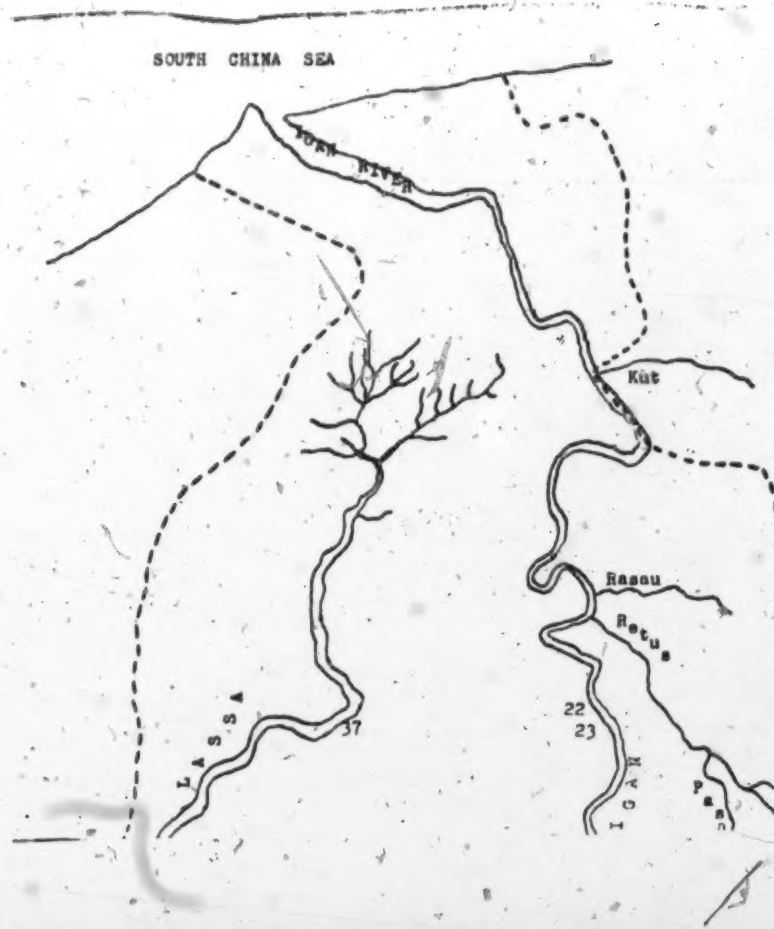

Key to Longhouse Numbers

1. Empaling, Assan
2. Ringkai, Lubok Guchi
3. Amboi, Assan Nunggang
4. Muyang, Batu Wong
5. Buda, Naman
6. Pg. Keringgai, Durin
7. Berandah, Durin
8. Ibom, Durin
9. Luat, Durin
10. Bojing, Durin
11. Gaong, Sengan
12. Nyelang, Salim
13. Imba', Salim
14. Nyambang, Salim
15. Ijau, Oya Road
16. Adup, Oya Road
17. Tuah, Oya Road
18. Tindit, Oya Road
19. Bandang, Pasai Bon
20. Salleh, Pasai Bon
21. Pg. Poh, Pasai
22. Selikau, Tutus
23. Ansi, Tutus
24. Jandi, Batu Burak
25. Lunju, Penasu'
26. Ungking, Penasu'
27. Nyala, Aup
28. Banta, Aup
29. Lon, Bidut
30. Mat, Langgup
31. Geli, Bawang Assan
32. Salleh, Bawang Assan
33. Gensi, Leta'an
34. Muling, Lengan
35. Tiong, Melangan
36. Kap, Nanga Lassa
37. Abon, Lassa

10

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6 Sibu

18:Sutlive E,M-S (1957-1974) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6
Sibu

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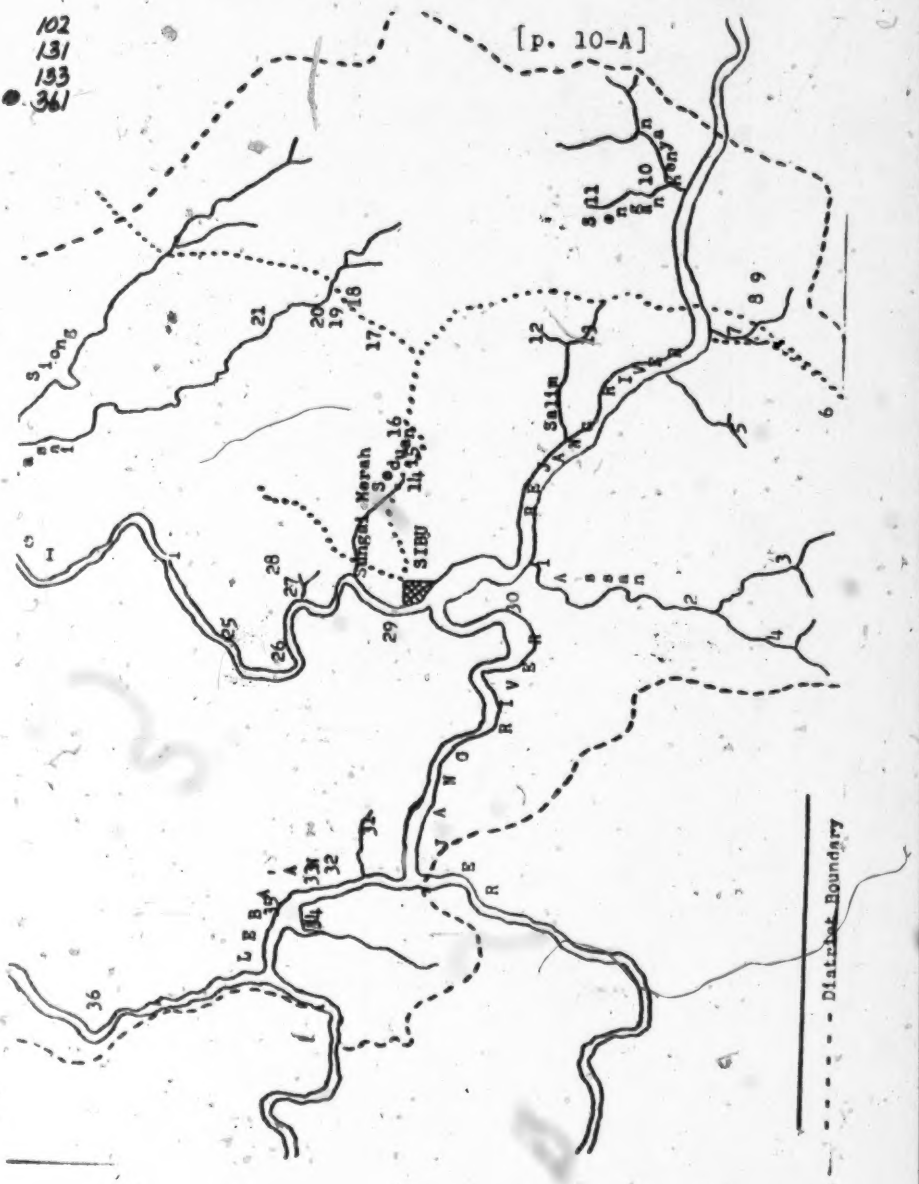
[p. 10-A]



18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6
Sibu

[p. 10-B]

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18:Sutlive - E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6
Sibu

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"'. . . These figures are not wholly attributable to failure of crops of increase of immigration, but largely due to partial or complete abandonment of their farming life by large sections of the natives of the country in favour of rubber planting. . .'"

"'. . . So long as it pays the natives better to plant rubber and buy their rice, they will naturally prefer to do less hard work on their padi farms than in previous years.'"

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In addition to making rubber production a viable economic alternative to small holders, the Rajah's policy was influential on the patterns of movement of the shifting Iban cultivators. By making it possible and encouraging each family to plant its own rubber estate, rather than allowing companies to plant large gardens to be worked either by plantation workers living in company quarters, as in Sumatra, or commuting, as in parts of Malaya, the Rajah made ownership of real property and interests therein a new fact in Iban adaptation. In contrast to the high degree of mobility characteristic of shifting cultivators, owners of rubber gardens are more sedentary, residing in proximity to the trees they tap daily. As one informant said, Kaki kami nyau lekat tegal getah ("Our feet were stuck because of rubber,"

[342] Anyau Bakit, 16 September, 1969. In some areas, for example, Bawang Assan, Ibans built permanent longhouses for the first time as they planted their rubber gardens. The eight-door rumah papan built close to the present-day site of Rumah Riang, was a novelty because of its

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban: OC6 Sibu

175 permanence and because it was the first longhouse in memory built of
249 planks.[18] In other areas, for example Oya Road and specifically
361 Rumah Tindit and Rumah Meruan, the advent of rubber has been influential
342 in the fragmentation of longhouses which have been abandoned as in-
177 dividual families moved away to be nearer to their gardens.[19]

249 Adaptation to rubber production was a shift in the value
177 system and social structure of the Iban community. For, whereas pre-
554 viously successful rice cultivation was a requisite for any Iban male
556 seeking recognition and upward mobility, rubber planting opened a new
way to wealth and acquisition of economic security, so much desired
243 and a sure sign of the blessings of the gods. The conflict between
249 the traditional padiculture and rubber growing was expressed in a
539 wide-spread story that rubber ate rice.[20] According to one version,

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[18] Owing to the practice of shifting cultivation, longhouses were impermanent structures, built of softwood posts, split bamboo floors, bark walls and thatched roofs, according to several informants (Unchat Chok, Tuai Rumah Gaong).

[796] [19] The ceremonial importance of the longhouse continues and bilik - families return occasionally for gawai and other ritual activities.

[114] [20] Pringle describes a similar story among the Saribas Ibans (1970-203), Freeman among the Balleh Ibans (1955-105), and Geddes among the Land Dayaks.

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6 Sibu

A. Rice Horticulture

The Ibans who moved into the Sibu District during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were shifting cultivators. The main characteristics of shifting cultivation are,

> "rotation of fields rather than crops; clearing by means of fire; absence of draft animals and of manuring; use of human labour only; employment of the dibble stick. . . ; short periods of soil occupancy alternating with long fallow periods."

As already discussed in Chapter Two, the movements of the Ibans into the area were due to a number of factors, one being the growth of the population in the Second Division, another the Iban value of new land and the status accorded the pioneer, a cultural reinforcement of an adaptive mechanism.

The horticulture of the Ibans did not involve rotation of fields so much as the gradual extension of their farms down the Sarikei and Kanowit, and their tributaries, and on across the Rejang and up the northern branches of tributaries of the Rejang and Igan. As one Tuai Rumah related,

> "We moved from Julau to Nanga Salim, thence we farmed both sides of the river, moving to uncleared and unclaimed areas and finally came to Ulu Salim."

The settlements of the Ibans who moved into the District were by no means as permanent as they are today. Rather, temporary houses were constructed in proximity to land selected for farming, and abandoned when the Ibans moved to new sites. As two women recounted the story of

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6 Sibu

361 the settlement of Bawang Assan, they described the frequency of the movements that took place prior to the final settlements.

> "We moved first to Bukit Lan, but the Rajah wouldn't let us grow rubber,[1] so we had to break up our longhouse and move to Bukit Pantu where we lived in individual dwellings (langkau). From there we moved across the Leba'an to Sungai Jabai, then to Sungai Bilat, back to Tembawai Nyiur,[2] to Tembawai Pungkang[3] and finally to Nanga Bawang Assan. Only then did we build a permanent longhouse. That's the reason why we have many jemuda'" ("previous farming sites").

243 178 Unlike the Ibans of the Sut and other new areas, who cultivate hill rice as described by Freeman (1955), those in the Sibu District mainly farm wet or swamp rice (padi paya'). The juxtaposition of several factors combined in the shift of the Ibans from the cultivation of hill to wet rice. The first and most obvious is the different lie of the land in the Rejang delta, where the relatively recent deposits of alluvial soils are flat, giving way only occasionally to hills and these generally at a [77] distance of several miles from the river banks. A second factor was the introduction of rubber and the Ibans' development of rubber gardens.

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[657] [829] [1]The Second Rajah's assignment of land for twelve miles below Sibu on either side of the Rejang has been rationalized in several different ways by the Ibans who were forced to move, this being one.

[103] [2]So named because of three coconut trees that still grow there.

[823] [3]The Ibans considered this site "hot" (angat) and unlucky because of an unusual number of illnesses and deaths, for which they had to abandon their houses (pungkang, "empty").

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6
Sibu

SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

A. The Longhouse Community

361
178 A majority of the Ibans of the Sibu District live in relatively permanent settlements, the most characteristic feature being the longhouse. As previously noted, several factors have influenced the transition from shifting cultivation to permanent settlement, among them the planting and development of rubber gardens, the shift from hill padi to wet padi and the possibilities of continuous cultivation of farm land or cultivation with shorter periods of fallow through fertilization, and restrictions on migration owing to population pressures.

361 Of 37 longhouses surveyed, the oldest is Rumah Salleh of Bawang Assan, which was built in 1920.[1] Two houses included in the sample were begun in 1970: Rumah Bandang of Pasai and Rumah Luat of Durin. Several other houses have been begun recently, and the average age of the houses in the sample is 13.5 years (see Table 32).[A]

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[622] [377] [1] Rumah Salleh was founded in 1920 but as with all longhouses, has been added onto at different times. In 1961, the ruai of Tuai Rumah Salleh was rebuilt of hardwood planks which later were shellaced, and his bilik was wired for lights and a refrigerator.

[A] [The author apparently means Table 31 on the following page--Analyst]

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TABLE 31

Length, Age and Construction of Selected Longhouses

Longhouse	Area	Units	Year Built	Age at Time of Survey	Partly Built by Tukang*	Dapor Separate from Bilik	Separated Storage Area
Empaling	Asaan	8	1966	4 years	X	X	X
Ringkai	Lubok Guchi	18	1950	20 years	X**	X	X
Amboi	Munggang	15	1958	12 years	X	X	
Banta	Aup	14	1962	8 years	X	X	
Nyala	Aup	33	1956	14 years	X	X	X
Nuyang	Batu Wong	31	1940	30 years		X	
Salleh	Bawang Asaan	20	1920	50 years+	X	X	X
Lun	Bidut	7	1939	31 years	X	X	X
Berandah	Durin	61	1942	28 years	X	X	X
Ibom	Durin Kiba	5	1945	25 years			
Luat	Kiba	4	1970	3 months		X	
Mat	Lawang	11	1949	21 years		X	
Tiang	Melanggan	24	1963	7 years		X	X
Buda	Naman	16	1952	18 years		X	
Bual	Oya Road	9	1970	5 months	X	X	
Adup	Oya Road	8	1966	4 years		X	X
Belan	Bun	12	1961	9 years		X	
Bandang	Bun	15	1970	4 months		X	
Entili	Oya Road	1	1969	1 year	X	X	
Ijau	Oya Road	13++	1949	21 years		X	
Julian	Bun	6	1960	10 years		X	
Meruan	Oya Road	19	1946	24 years	X	X	
Nyambang	Oya Road	16+++	1969	1 year	X	X	X
Tueh	Oya Road	5	1966	4 years	X	X	

* = professional carpenter

** = tuai rumah's residence built by carpenter, but no others.

\+ = Several sections, including tuai rumah's have been rebuilt by tukang.

++ = in addition to the 13 attenuated units, 14 families are still in separate dwellings.

+++ = all separate.

361 In addition to those factors mentioned above, the permanence of settlements is influenced by other circumstances as well, such as availability of a personally determined adequate water supply, proximity to farm lands, distance from roads and means of communication with other communities and urban areas, and the quality of materials and craftsmanship used in the construction of the longhouse.

Freeman's generalization that,

> "all Iban long-houses are situated on the banks of rivers, or streams, navigable by dug-out canoes,"

361 does not apply to a number of settlements in the Sibu District. In some
312 cases, Ibans have been crowded into areas which, by their own evaluation, are less desirable owing to poor water supplies. For example, at Bukit Penyau, where the Iban longhouses are surrounded by Chinese settlements, the only water supply available for a community of fifteen doors is a small ground-well containing greenish, stagnant water. As opportunities have presented themselves, the Ibans of that community have moved to other sites offering better water.

361 Increasingly, the proximity of farm lands to the longhouse is in-
241 fluencing the settlement patterns of the Ibans. Unlike the peers who practice shifting cultivation, maintaining a permanent longhouse but locating annually in farmhouses (<u>langkau, rumah alau</u>) at some distance from the longhouse, the Ibans of this District infrequently find it necessary to farm so far away from the longhouses that they must spend
000 nights away (<u>bemalam</u>) at the farm. The introduction of the Padi Planting

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6
Sibu

The introduction of the Padi Planting
361 Scheme by the Agriculture Department has permitted approximately sixty per
241 cent of the Ibans to farm near their longhouses. In several cases where
[654] the farms were deemed too far away, the families concerned moved closer to their farms and built a new longhouse as, for instance, in the case of Rumah Nyelang of Ulu Salim.

369 The longhouse communities of the District are related to the pasar in a variety of ways, as already discussed. These relations are expressed in the increasing frequency of travel between longhouses and the pasar,
[178] and the demand of Ibans for ways and means of travel. Whereas prior to the mid-1960's travel was either by water or by bicycle-paths, the construction of the Oya-Durin Road system through the District has effected changes in the means of travel and in the orientation of rural residents. Bus service is available to the Oya and Durin Roads and for those who are willing and able to pay, taxis-licensed and private[2] -travel wherever and whenever they are paid. High-powered motor launches, sometimes misnamed "expresses," ply between Sibu and rural areas, navigating the Rajang, Igan and Leba'an Rivers.

361 Extension of the road system and the urban connections offered
178 thereby has produced several interesting examples of value change and resettlement by Ibans. When surveyors began laying out the lines for the new road through Ulu Naman, the people of Rumah Buda forcibly blocked the

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[2] Read, "pirate."

361 construction of the road near their house for fear that it would make
178 their longhouse angat ("hot, unhealthy") because new. Reluctantly, the engineers rerouted the road at a distance of one hour's walk from the house. After the road had been completed, the members of Rumah Buda realized the benefits offered by the road: regular transportation to Sibu, greater availability of Government services and goods, and opportunities for more contact with friends and relatives. Consequently, they have abandoned the old longhouse and are building small, individual house along the roadside.[3]

342 A final factor in the permanence of longhouse settlements is re-
361 lated to the amount of money, time and labor invested in the house's con-
[171] struction. Historically, Iban longhouses were not as sturdily constructed as the houses of other indigenous groups, such as the Kayans. The Iban longhouses were constructed of ironwood posts but flooring, walls and
[84] roofing was of less durable materials. The reason offered by the Iban, Anyau Bakit, was that the Iban never expected to occupy the house for more than five or six years before moving on to fell and farm other virgin

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[3] The forcible blocking of the original route was related in a lament by Pengulu Meringgai who reckoned that he lost about M$50,000 due to the rerouting. According to the old plan, the road would have gone through fifty acres of his land, the price of which would have risen to M$1,000 per acre. As it turned out, he, too, had to move in order to live closer to the road.

361 342 [829] land.[4] We have noted already the significance the Ibans attached to the construction of the first house made of durable planks (rumah papan) at Bewang Assan.

Where longhouses are old or built of impermanent materials, they may be abandoned or dismantled. When this occurs, the occupants will move either to a new site if a more favorable one is available, or else build temporary houses (dapor, kitchen) immediately behind the old site on which the new house will be built. In three cases out of ten in which longhouses were abandoned or dismantled, the residents rebuilt on the same site. In the other seven cases, the residents moved to new sites but in no instance more than three miles distance from the former house site. In four of the ten cases, the Ibans did not construct a new longhouse but rather a cluster of individual houses, about which more will be said later.

361 241 It must be noted that while the longhouse system may be described as one of relatively permanent residence, the Ibans in some instances return only occasionally to the longhouse. For example, the occupants of Rumah Maruan live in langkau immediately adjacent their rubber gardens, returning to the longhouse only for ceremonial or judicial occasions.

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[178] [4] Dulu' suba' ambis lama' kuat diau lima tauka enam taun, pindah ngiga' menoa baru. Tang, diatu' enda' ulih, orang enggai agi' ("Formerly, the longest people lived in one place would be for five or six years, then move on to look for new country. But, you can't do that now, and the people no longer want to"), Anyau Bakit, interview, 22 March, 1971.

361 241 Thus, they spend only one month in each year at the longhouse, and the remainder of the time they reside in their langkau.

B. Rationale for the Longhouse System

361 925 829 Although the origins of the longhouse system are unknown, Ibans questioned on the probable reason for the development of the longhouse system attribute it to three principal functions, which are defensive, ceremonials, and juridical. Every Iban who was asked about the origin of the longhouse system related it to a strategy of defense when head-hunting was still common. Scattered settlements, they said, would have been easy prey for predators, hence the banding together of kin-groups in longhouse communities.

621 796 The ceremonial functions of the longhouse are related to mechanisms activated to express and re-inforce the solidarity of the community, to renew ties with distant kinsmen, and to provide a means of upward social mobility. The times of planning and executing the various gawai involve the entire community: men, women and children. Lengthy discussions are held on the ruai of the tuai rumah and everyone engages in pleasant banter, [574] anticipating the forthcoming event. When a major gawai is carried out, members of each family visit kinsmen to ask eggs for smoking, together with chickens and pigs from relatives who are invited to the gawai, and who will make similar requests from the sponsors in the future. Gift-giving, cooperative labors and the cordial relations which mark the festive occasions provide an opportunity for amicable associations to be recounted and relived in many evening's randau ruai.

829 621 own situation he says:

> "If my anembiak decide to put up a new longhouse, I will build a bilik in it. It's much more pleasant to live in the longhouse rather than alone."

But until then, Nyambang will make do with his present lodgings. [178] It is significant that those who formerly were considered deviant because they put up individual dwellings and lived alone have become the models whom many other desire to emulate.

C. Physical Layout of Settlements

361 342 Although the settlements within this District show considerable variations in the layout of buildings, still the central building in a majority of the communities is the longhouse. A settlement may be comprised of a single longhouse or of several longhouses. Rumah Gdong is a single house, located three miles off the Durin Road and two miles from the next nearest house. Rh. Nyala is built beside Rh. Banta at Sungai Aup. In the Bawang Assan area, there are seven longhouses, two built on the right bank of the Batang Leba'an, five on the banks of the Sungai Bawang Assan, and all within walking distance of one another.

361 342 178 There is at present no longhouse where Nyambang has built his residence, and, given the amount of his investment and the funds becoming available to his anembiak through the forest enterprise that has been opened in their area, enabling them to put up prestigious separate houses, it is doubtful that a new longhouse will be constructed. In fact, some of the anembiak already have constructed houses rivalling that of Nyambang

361 himself.
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Several other instances of the physical fragmentation of longhouses have occurred within the District. At Rumah Nangkai, Batang Pasai, there no longer is a longhouse but an aggregate of individual dwellings built along the rising ground where the former longhouse stood. When Rumah Tindit, Oya Road, broke up in 1962, some of the members joined together to build a new longhouse at a new site. Others, however, such as Entili, chose to build separate houses along the Road in the vicinity of the 15th Mile.

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One man stated that Government has encouraged the dissolution of longhouses for several reasons. Among these are concerns over health and fire, for when illness or fire strike a house, it may sweep through the entire community. But more important in the Government's mind is the delicate problem of land-reform, an unresolved and highly critical issue that contributed to the fall of one Chief Minister and an unwillingness by [671] the Alliance Coalition to deal with it. Under Iban adat, former longhouse sites (tembawai) are held in perpetuity by members and their descendants so long as they continue to constitute a longhouse community. When they dissolve their community, however, all rights to the tembawai are relinquished and the land reverts to the State. The difficulties of keeping track of claims to long-abandonded house-sites are obvious, and a problem Government could solve through the fragmentation of those communities near the roads.

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342 In two of the four longhouses on which concentrated studies were carried out, a number of families lived in units constructed on the outer edge of the tanju' and called pelaboh. In some instances, living in pelaboh is temporary, for example, a young couple may live there until they can accumulate enough money and goods to add a permanent extension onto the longhouse proper. In other cases, living in pelaboh may be of a permanent nature. For instance, Umpi ak Paran of Rumah Nyala, Sungai Aup, has constructed a pelaboh of permanent material off the tanju' of his own section of the house, turning over the bilik to his son, Juna and his family, and settling his family in the pelaboh. Similarly, at Ruman Gaong, Sengan, the sons of Changgan, Manang Biga', no longer could live with their parents and built pelaboh, separating from the old people.

In this connection, it should be noted that pelaboh are constructed for two physical reasons as well as those already noted. At both Rumah Nyala and Rumah Gaong, the center of the longhouse is built on a nob which falls away on either side, so that the heights above the ground at each end of the longhouse are about twenty feet. The families who have built pelaboh maintain that it is unsafe as well as impractical to add on to the end of the longhouse by putting up a structure at a higer elevation. The second reason offered is that to add onto the end of the longhouse removes the family too far from the center or other end, whereas by putting on a pelaboh, the family is close to the social and political center of activities.

343 the layout of the settlements. In the case of Rumah Gaong, Enchul has [231 491] built a cattle-shed for his 15 head of cattle, a watering pond, and garage-storage shed two miles distance from Rumah Gaong and at the end of the three mile road which he had extended into his property from the Durin Road.

361 Site plans for Rumah Nyala and Rumah Gaong are included on the following pages to indicate visually the relative positions of the buildings in the settlements.

D. Land Tenure and Use

423 [181] To describe the Ibans as a land-hungry people is no misstatement. Previously, they desired new land for the practice of shifting cultivation. Today, many realize the economic potential of land on a highly inflated market, and some are sellers, other speculators.

The movements of various groups of Ibans into the Sibu District were similar in the practices and principles followed in use and tenure. When members of a community entered a new area, they discussed and decided among themselves how much land would be needed by each family involved. Each family in turn was allotted the amount agreed upon-ten fathoms, twenty fathoms - on the water's edge, and then the distance cleared from the river depended upon the labor-force and industry of each family. But, one principle that was firmly applied was that each unit had to clear straight away from the river and parallel to families on either side. It may be imagined that this gave rise to a number of land cases in which the issue

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 339]

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6
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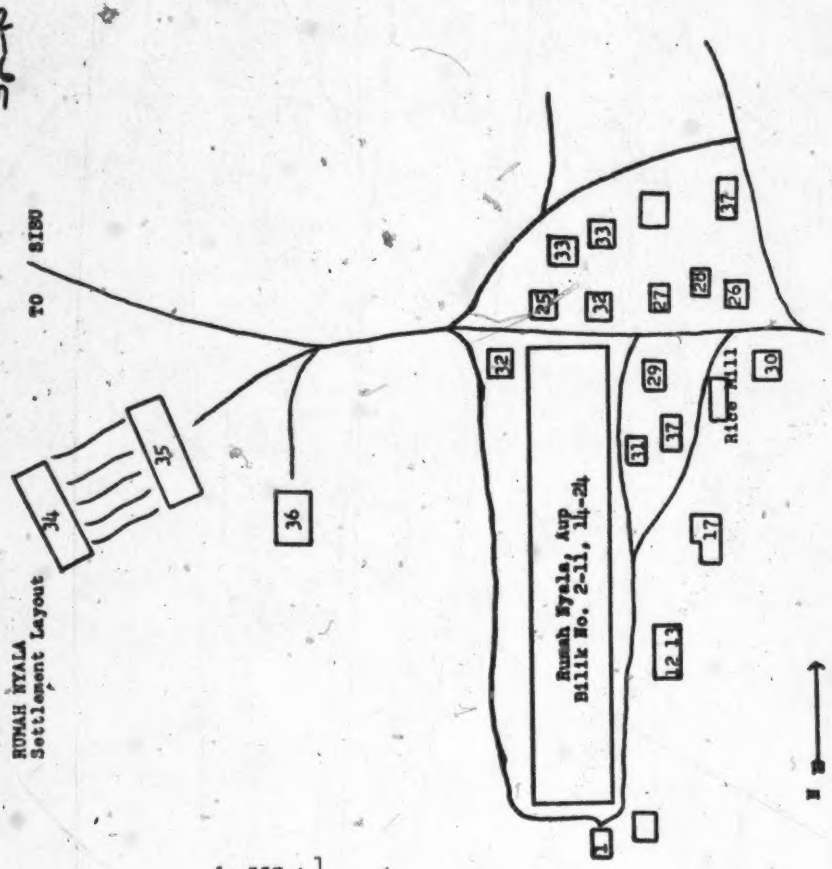

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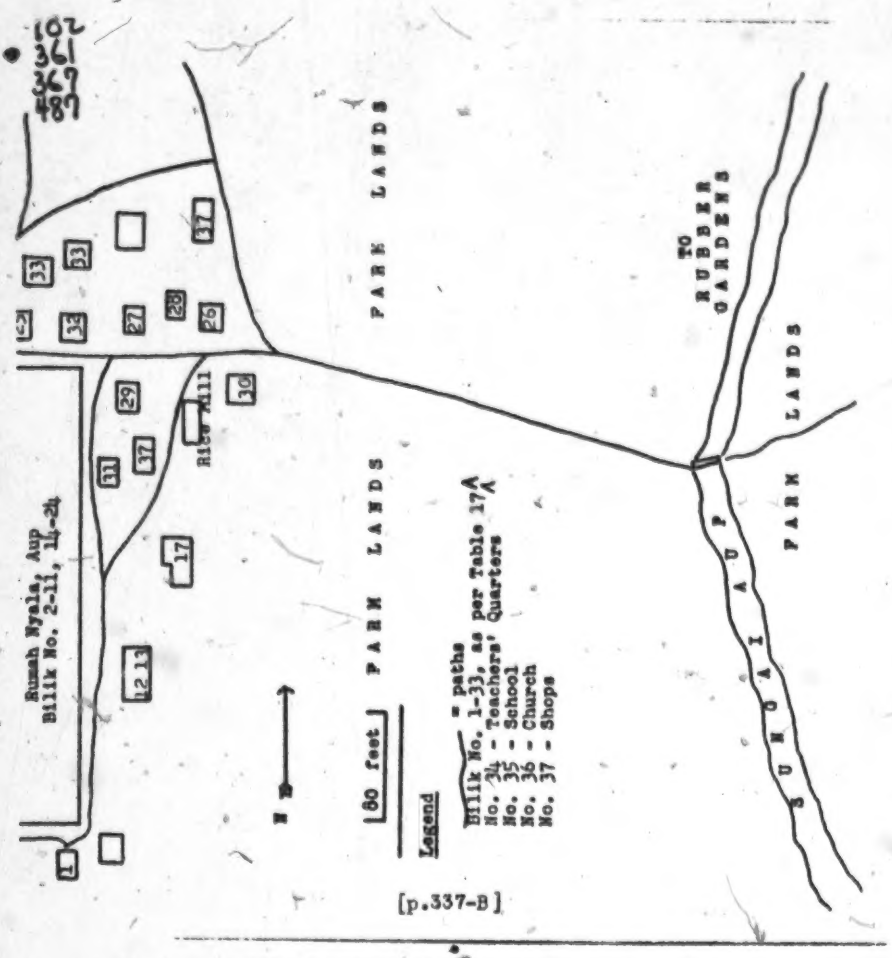

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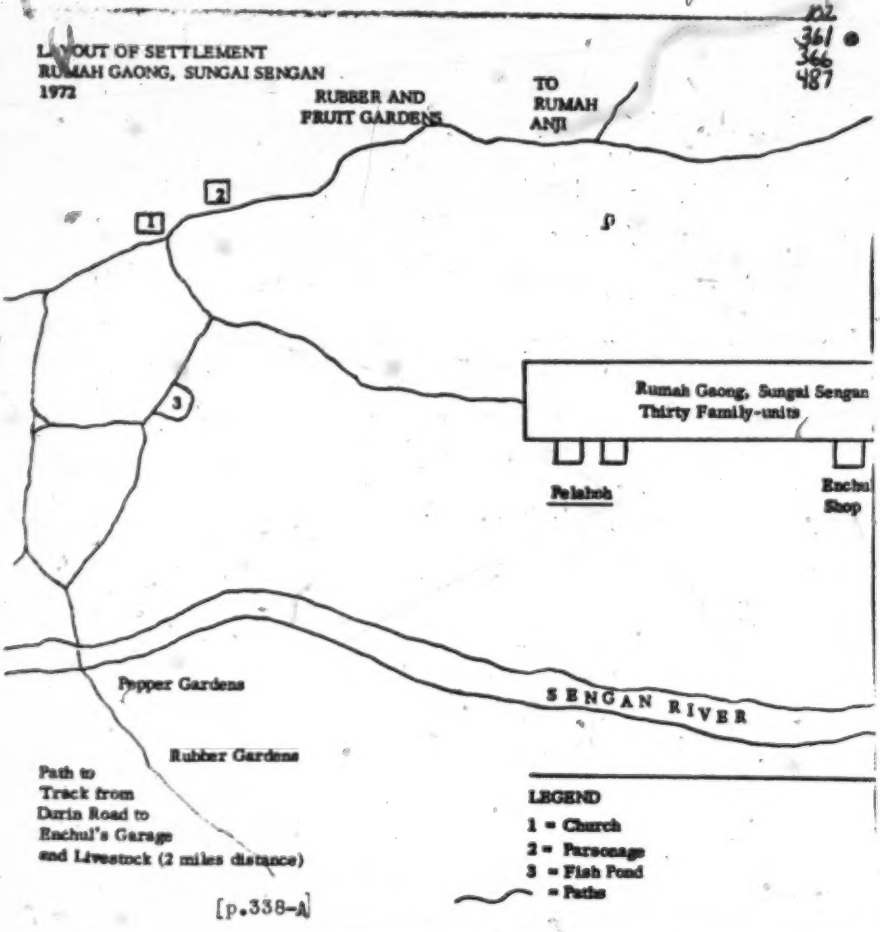

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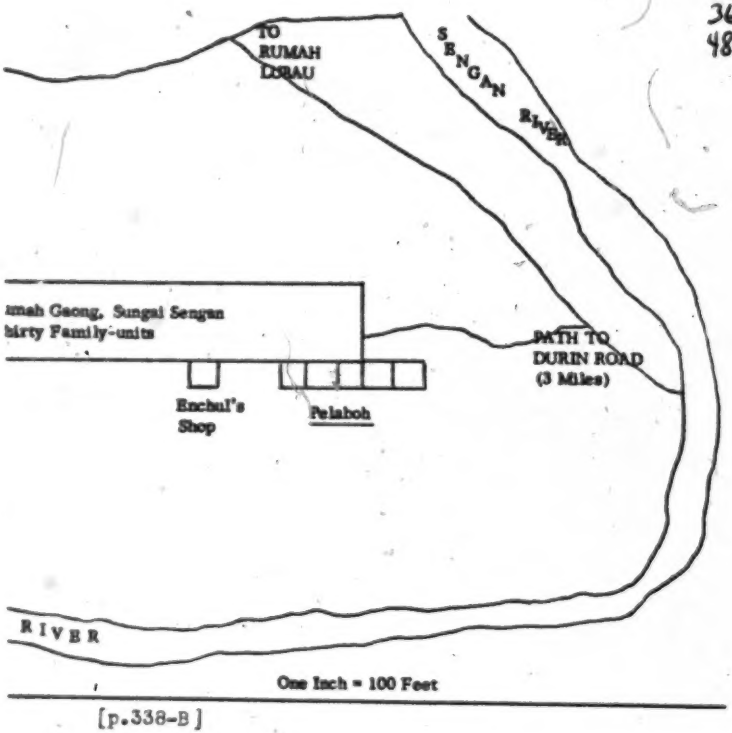

[p.338-B]

621 contemporary society. To others, and still the majority of Ibans, the
342 longhouse system is the jalai pengidup ("way of life") that is most mean-
198 ingful culturally. The longhouse still is an important center for social
183 events and many persons stated their preference for the crowd and sounds of the longhouse rather than for the loneliness and silence of a separate house.
[796] Further, the longhouse is a ceremonial center for the various gawai, to
[476] which even the newly emerging urban elite, among them some college graduates, return and take part. The mutual aid provided for the events of moment in the life-cycle of the individual has been adduced as another reason for the continuing popularity of the longhouse. And finally, the longhouse continues to provide an aura of security, in reality little, during the present period of terrorist activities.

Thus, the number of people who have left the longhouse community and built individual dwellings in rural areas is still relatively small and dependent upon those factors discussed as well as idio-syncratic reasons.

H. Urban Residence

369 The movement of an estimated 3,000 Ibans into the Sibu Urban area
177 has resulted in their dispersion throughout the town and in several patterns
361 of residence. These patterns of residence are related to a number of factors,
[162] including the presence or absence of kinsmen, length of time and purpose for coming to the town, position and income and whether quarters are furnished by the employer.

369 In several visits to the now-razed Rumah Temuai ("Guest House"), I discovered that only those Iban who knew no single persons in Sibu stayed there. Some were there to visit sick relatives in the hospital, others were working temporarily or more permanently and saving money by living in the 369 Rumah Temuai. But as soon as they could find other lodging that their 574 resources permitted them to rent, or made acquaintances with whom they could "take shelter" (numpang), they moved out to take up other accommodations and from then on, were open to demands for hospitality from kinsmen and friends.

369 A vast majority of Iban residents in the Sibu Urban area live either 362 in rented quarters or in housing furnished by the employer. Seventy-three 427 of the Iban employees in our sample listed in Table 15 (page 197) live in [466] quarters provided by their employer. Forty-seven of these employees are renting rooms, and 22 indicated that they are living with friends or kins- [423] men in one of these two groups. It is significant that only nine of the 171 economically active Ibans in Sibu own their own homes, and all of these nine have been long-time residents of the town, and generally they are more affluent than those living in rented quarters or those furnished by the employer.

361 There is no "Iban Ward" of Sibu Urban area, the Iban population 369 being scattered from Sungai Antu to Upper Lanang Road. The heaviest concentrations tend to be at the Lanang Road Field Force Camp, where an average 1,000 members, mostly Iban, live with their families; at Sungai Antu

361 Industrial Area, where until recently families of the Malaysian Rangers
369 lived, and where several hundred Ibans still live; and in apartments along Mission Road, Tong Sang Road and the other tributaries of Lanang Road.
[87] More than 150 Ibans enrolled in urban schools are living in school hostels or renting rooms in the pasar.

361 In summary, the longhouse system continues to be the predominant
342 type of settlement pattern among the Ibans of this district. For want of
178 accurate statistics, it is impossible to determine exactly how many Ibans have left the longhouse in order to construct individual houses, but an educated estimate permits us to place the figure at between two- and three-
[369] hundred families. Of the estimated 3,000 Iban residents in the urban area, most are newcomers and live either in quarters furnished for them or in rented rooms. These residents are fairly evenly scattered throughout the urban area, with concentrations of Ibans near places of employment, schools and apartment houses.

18:Sutlive E,M-5 (1957-1971) 1973 OC6 Iban OC6 Sibu

D. Mobility and Opportunism

183 Related to the strong achievement orientation of the Ibans are two other closely associated values, mobility and opportunism. Mobility includes not only the traditional physical shifts of residence related to rice cultivation, but also the transfer of relations among kinsmen and non-kinsmen and changes in cultural values as opportunities for greater exploitation occur. By opportunism I mean the readiness with which most members of the society seize any perceived opportunity for maximization of personal benefit, whether in wage-earning, education, Christianity or politics.

361 At the risk of redundancy I have stressed the high incidence of mobility among the Ibans. The quality of the soils and the practice of slash-and-burn cultivation made necessary their movements each five or six years as the land near their longhouses deteriorated and yields diminished. When distances to the farms became too great or numbers more than could be [178] supported, some members of the community moved to look for new land. This pattern changed only after the Ibans became more sedentary through the shift to wet-rice cultivation, the planting of rubber gardens, and in this District the immigration of thousands of Chinese who became competitors for land.

484 574 The Ibans long have been a people on the move in other ways as well. In addition to the often-mentioned institution of pejalai, visits between kinsmen and friends are made frequently, often as not over relatively great distances. With recent improvements in communications, the incidence of visits is even higher. While men have tended to be more mobile than women, the latter also pay visits, travel to other towns to

175 At the beginning of this century, recognizing that they were here
361 to stay, Ibans in the Bawang Assan area constructed the first permanent
342 longhouse in memory, the rumah papan ("house of planks"). Previously,
178 house construction had been predicated upon the frequent movements of the shifting cultivators, and was of an impermanent nature. Sedentary settlements of Iban groups have been marked by the erection of substantial longhouses. Although the future of the longhouse domicile may be in question, Iban house-types, whether individual dwelling or attenuated structure, are permanent buildings.

654 A radically new concept of land tenure resulted from the establish-
423 ment of the Lands and Survey Department which claimed the right to re-
177 gister land and to issue permits and titles. In Iban polity land was held under usufruct rights by descendants of a pioneer who cleared it. Land disputes were settled within the longhouse community by appeal to senior members or others who were familiar with migrations and genealogies. Setting up a department to handle land matters represented an incursion of external authority into Iban society, the erosion of traditional polity, and the orientation of its members to the Opis Lan Ensabi as the locus of power in land matters.

177 The Second Rajah's encouragement of Chinese trade and immigration
657 helped to produce a situation he wanted to avoid, in which sociocultural change has taken place among the Ibans. The frequent contacts and long associations of Ibans with Chinese and Malays have led to social and

653 As cash became available to Ibans and other indigenes they had
199 the means for acquiring goods in the pasar. The development of a cheap
167 public transportation system by water and road in the 1960's provided ways to and from the pasar. The sense of distance between longhouse and pasar was reduced as the travel time was shortened, and Ibans who long had been attracted to the pasar began to enter into its activities in increasing numbers. Some have made periodic visits to the pasar, others took up residence. Whereas there had been a reticence on the part of many Ibans to make their homes in the pasar, owing in part to the sense of distance from their fellows and in part to the closed economic system as they perceived it, over the past decade several thousand Ibans have moved from their longhouses to the town. The pioneering efforts of a few Ibans have led the way for many others.

199 Exposure to other ethnic groups and acculturation have led to
361 changes in residence pattern and economic activities among the Ibans of
621 this District. In the rural areas the longhouse domicile remains the
[342] most distinctive characteristic of Iban settlements, but social and physical fragmentation is increasing as more members of the longhouses spend less time in them, and in several hundred cases Ibans have erected
[198] permanent individual dwellings. It is important to note that if the longhouse community declines in favor of separate houses, the seat of the community's meetings and ceremonial activities, and area of socialization, viz., the ruai, will shift. Perhaps it is the other way around and the longhouse is diminishing in significance as less importance is attached to the ruai-centered activities.